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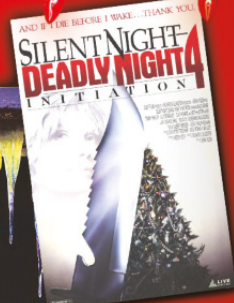
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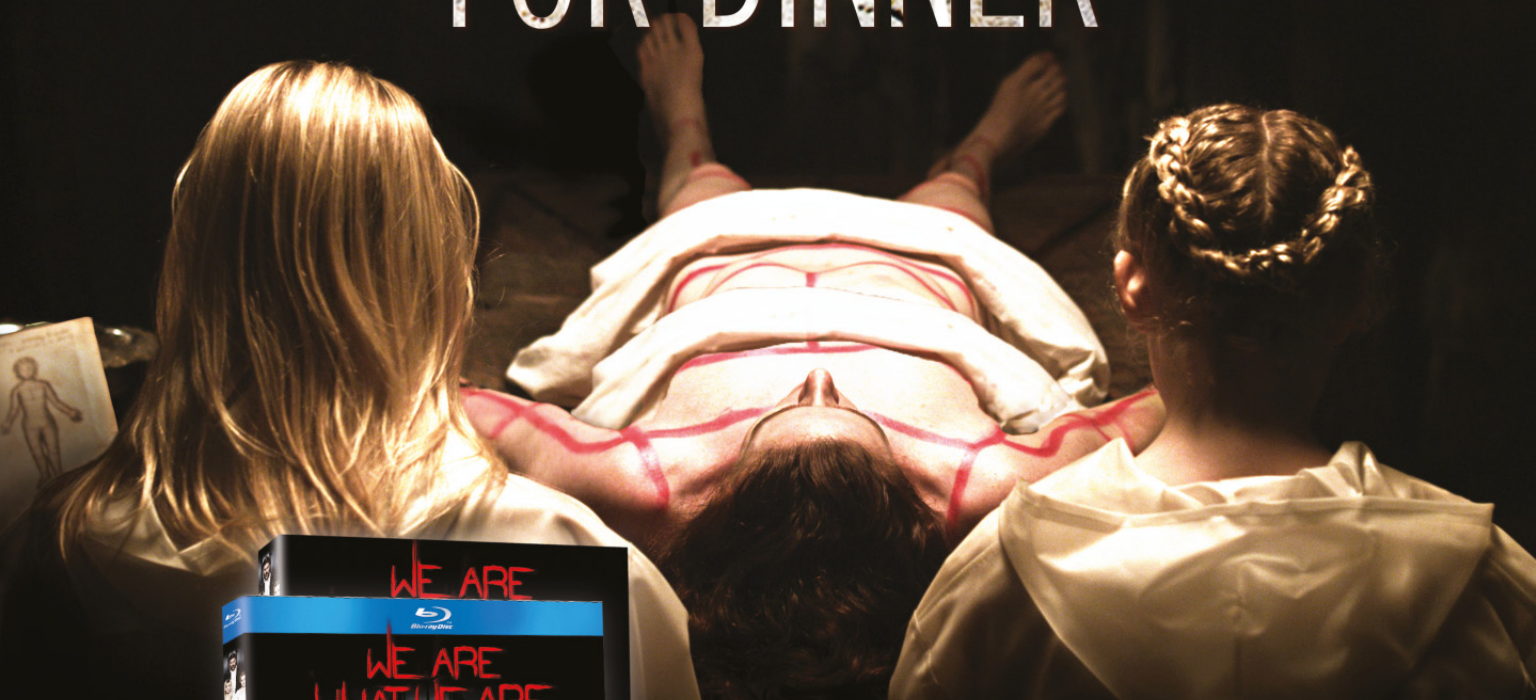


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# NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND



Horror in Culture & Entertainment

## RUE MORGUE

MARRS MEDIA INC. RUE-MORGUE.COM

1411 DUFFERIN STREET, TORONTO, ONTARIO, M6H 4C7, CANADA

PH: 416.651.9675 FAX: 416.651.6085 EMAIL: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM

FB: FACEBOOK.COM/RUEMORGUEMAGAZINE TWITTER: TWITTER.COM/RUEMORGUE

### STAFF

<b>PUBLISHER</b>	<b>EDITOR-IN-CHIEF</b>
RODRIGO GUDIÑO	DAVE ALEXANDER
<b>MANAGING EDITOR</b>	<b>MUSIC EDITOR</b>
MONICA S. KUEBLER	AARON VON LUPTON
<b>ART DIRECTOR</b>	<b>ONLINE EDITOR</b>
ANDREW WRIGHT	APRIL SNELLINGS
<b>DESIGN CONSULTANT</b>	<b>COPY EDITOR</b>
JUSTIN ERICKSON	CLAIRE HORSNELL
<b>OFFICE MANAGER</b>	<b>FINANCIAL CONTROLLER</b>
RON MCKENZIE	MARCO PECOTA
<b>ADVERTISING MANAGER</b>	<b>ACCOUNTING</b>
JODY INFURNARI	DAVE JACOMBS
PH: 905-985-0430	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT</b>
FX: 905-985-4195	VANESSA FURTADO
E: jody@rue-morgue.com	

### INTERNS

ALI CHAPPELL	BRETT MCNEILL
AARON MOORE	

### RUE MORGUE INTERNATIONAL

FABIEN DELAGE (FRANCE)	facebook.com/RueMorgueFrance
RICHARD GLADMAN (UK)	facebook.com/RueMorgueUK
MOANER T. LAWRENCE (GERMANY)	facebook.com/RueMorgueGermany
AARON SOTO (MEXICO)	facebook.com/RueMorgueMexico

### CONTRIBUTORS

STUART F. ANDREWS	PETER GUTIERREZ
MIKE BEARDSALL	MARK R. HASAN
BRENTON BENTZ	KIEL HUME
LYLE BLACKBURN	LAST CHANCE LANCE
JOHN W. BOWEN	DEJAN OGNJANOVIC
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RUE MORGUE #140 would not have been possible without the valuable assistance of: Mary-Beth Hollyer, Al McMullan and Captain Howdy.

### COVER: THE EXORCIST

Illustration by Jason Edmiston  
Design by Justin Erickson

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If you say "Pazuzu" and the guy next to you says "Gesundheit," he's no horror fan. Not even casually. It's safe to say that he probably goes out of his way to avoid the genre altogether if he's not hip to the name of the demon in the biggest horror movie of all time, *The Exorcist*.

And the 40-year-old film is the biggest, given that it won two Oscars and was nominated for seven others, it continues to make Warner Brothers a shit-ton of money on multiple reissues, and it still tops Greatest Horror Movie lists. Earlier this year it was numero uno on the *Time Out London* 100 Best Horror Films list, which was compiled with help from the likes of Clive Barker, Guillermo del Toro, Coffin Joe, Ben Wheatley, Alice Cooper, Kim Newman, Roger Corman, etc. That's exceptional staying power.

I'll never forget the time I first saw *The Exorcist* on home video as a teenager. Two friends stayed over for a movie night; mom was upstairs asleep as we watched the film in the dark. When it was done, there were sighs of relief and attempts to act like it was no big deal, but we were all on edge. My house had a staircase that was open on both sides, and we had to make our way up it quietly in the dark, as not to wake up mom. I let the other two start up the stairs and hung back for a second. Then, in my best Mercedes McCambridge rasp, I snarled "Dhhhaaaamiennnn!" while grabbing an ankle through the banister. One friend – who was captain of the high school football team – shrieked and jumped up about four stairs, while the other one gargled something incomprehensible and began kicking wildly. Curses were cursed, mom was woken up and to this day I still laugh about it. Few films are so affecting.

Watching *The Exorcist* again in preparation for our cover story, I was pleased at how it's aged, thanks to the quality of Blu-ray, which enriches its complex sound design and proves just how detailed Dick Smith's makeup were; I couldn't pick out seams and splotches that reveal themselves in many other films whose makers never anticipated hi-def.

It isn't simply the technical aspects of *The Exorcist* that have allowed it to endure, though. Tastes and cultural anxieties fuel the popularity of landmark films at certain periods in history, and those change considerably over the course of four decades. For example, the film is slow-paced compared to the average genre movie made now, and we live in a more secular world where the supernatural elements of religion aren't as potent as they were in 1973. Religion never held much sway with me, yet the very Catholic film (which was officially endorsed by the Church) has always enthralled me.

There's not enough space here to detail how effective the storytelling is, with writer William Peter Blatty's mystery-of-evil plot, the shocking visuals director William Friedkin brought to screen, or the editing team's atmosphere of unease punctuated by nerve-fraying shock cuts. All that continues to juice the film, but Tom Huddleston's write-up for the *Time Out* list succinctly sums up to me just why *The Exorcist* is timeless.

"By the '70s, horror had divided into two camps: on one hand, there were the 'real life' terrors of *Psycho* and *Night of the Living Dead*, films that brought horror into the realm of the everyday, making it all the more shocking. On the other, there were the more outrageous dream-horror popular in Europe, the work of Hammer Studios in the UK and Mario Bava and Dario Argento in Italy, films that prized artistry, oddity and explicit gore over narrative logic. ... The first to achieve that blend with absolute certainty was *The Exorcist*."

Pazuzu is the face of this unnerving marriage of two worlds. He/she/it is a tangible statue in the Iraqi desert, a ghostly face in the frame (more so in the 2000 reissue), and a spiritual and physical infection unexplainable by science. We see the demon render the pure (a twelve-year-old girl) impure (a profane, sexual, bloody, barf-spewing, monster that defies physics). The actual journey of taking an audience from mundane reality to absolute mind-bending surreality is tough to pull off, but it does so handily. And whether or not you believe the religious doctrine wrapped around the movie, it provides an existing mythology for this transformation to unfold within that works on us because it's dead serious. Catholic faith locks us into the bizarre abject horrors via characters who believe even if we do not. And when it comes to horror we badly want to believe in those narratives so we can tremor under their weight.

*The Exorcist* created a narrative space for this to happen. Given not only its ongoing popularity but also the resurgence of exorcism movies, Pazuzu and his demonic brethren ain't nothin' to sneeze at.

*Dave Alex*

dave@rue-morgue.com



# POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



**MY FRIENDS** at @Netflix\_CA and @RueMorgue throw one hell of a Halloween party.

**@BROCKMCLAUGHLIN, VIA TWITTER**

**THE COSTUMES** at the @Netflix\_CA and @RueMorgue party are best I have ever seen! Crazy, scary, creative!

**@CASIESTEWART, VIA TWITTER**

[See photos from our Halloween party on p.36 – Ed.]

**I FINALLY GOT** the Halloween issue of *Rue Morgue* with me on the cover. What an honour to be in such great company. *Rue Morgue* was the first magazine to let the world know about me and my films and I am very thankful.

**FRED VOGEL, VIA FACEBOOK**

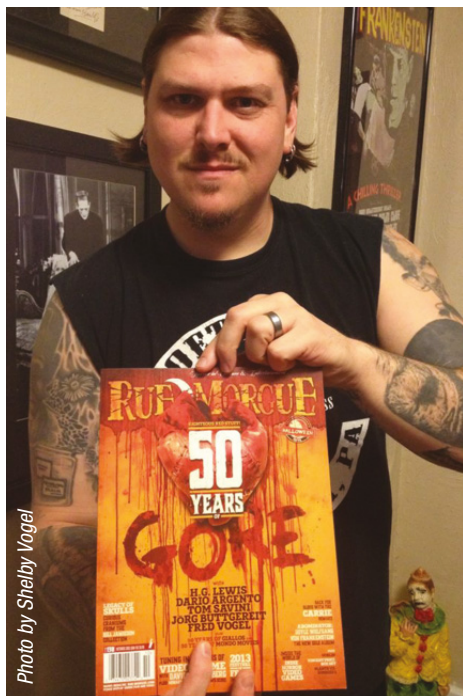


Photo by Shelby Vogel

**EPIC HALLOWEEN!** Thanks @RueMorgue for that fantastic 35mm presentation of *The Changeling*. Look forward to it next year!

**@LOUDMOUTHJULIA, VIA TWITTER**

**GREAT JOB WITH RM#138**, as usual, but I have to say I was struck by the extremely negative reviews of two films that happen to be among my favourite releases so far this year, *Twixt* and *Gallowwalkers*. Not a complaint, mind you, just an observation about how otherwise like minds (we're all horror

fans here, of course – hell, I average watching probably 300+ movies in the genre every year) can approach the same material so differently.

**DAN BAILEY, VIA FACEBOOK**

**FRIGHT GALLERY BY GARY PULLIN** needs to be at least a two-page spread in every issue. Also, I loved the Classic Cut about Caravaggio's *The Beheading Of John The Baptist* in *RM* #138. He's my favourite classical horror art like this in the future. Keep up the great work!

**WENDY RAE LEAUMONT, VIA FACEBOOK**

**GREAT FINALLY** getting to see *Willow Creek*. Loved the ending! Thanks to the Toronto After Dark Film Festival and *Rue Morgue* for programming it!

**@THEMIKESCHWARTZ, VIA TWITTER**

**I AM A NEW SUBSCRIBER** who never before considered sending words of admiration to a magazine, or any other public forum for that matter. I have always been drawn to what I personally consider high class art, be it records, paintings, photography or any other form of creative expression that does not solely take place in the contemporary digital, hollow and bleak reality of ours. *Rue Morgue* feeds not only my fanatical hunger for exploring both known and obscure dark artistry, but does so with such style and extravagance that I've once again found passion for the work I do on my own! Thank you for doing what you do, still believing in the physical format and giving whoever is in charge of art direction and layout a forum to put a little magic into this world.

**NIKLAS KVARFORTH – SWEDEN**

**JUST RECEIVED MY** @RueMorgue Jan/Feb 2003 back issue. Lots of cool material. Someone bought it ten years ago feeling the same way I do now!

**@INHUMANITIESPOD, VIA TWITTER**

**SO COOL TO SEE** that Gary Pullin featured Pumpkin Rot in his Fright Gallery segment in the October issue (#138) of *Rue Morgue* magazine!

**CHAD SAVAGE, VIA FACEBOOK**

## CORRECTION:

In *RM*#138's At the Monitors of Madness feature, the website noted for Indie Game Reviewer was incorrect. The URL is indiegamereviewer.com.

*Rue Morgue* regrets the error.

## EXPIRING MINDS...

ON RUE MORGUE'S FACEBOOK PAGE

### CRACKTASM II

If a horror movie were made about **TORONTO MAYOR ROB FORD**, what would it be called? *Canadian Psycho*? *The Incredible Meltdown Mar*? *Cracktasm*?

---

*The Crack House by the Cemetery*  
**TOM BREEN**

---

*Maniac Mayor*, as a tasteful sequel to *Maniac Cop*.  
**RYAN BENNETT**

---

*Mayors Shouldn't Play with Crack Pipes* (gotta go with a Bob Clark riff).  
**BILLY BAUGHMAN**

---

*A Nightmare on Queen Street*.  
**JEFF PARIS**

---

*Profondo Cracko*.  
**JEREMY HOBBS**

---

*Un Rinoceronte Con Quattro Dieci Rocce Dollari*, a.k.a. *A Rhinoceros With Four Ten Dollar Rocks* – It's a giallo!  
**JEFF MELO**

---

*Nose Candyman*.  
**JONATHAN HALLIDAY**

WE ENCOURAGE READERS TO SEND THEIR COMMENTS VIA MAIL OR EMAIL. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND/OR CONTENT. PLEASE SEND TO INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM OR:

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# Headlines



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

## ASTRON-6 IN PRODUCTION ON A GIALLO CO-STARRING UDO KIER

Now that Astron-6 has had its way with sci-fi action flicks (*Manborg*) and gory exploitation films (*Father's Day*), the Canadian filmmaking collective is taking on the giallo. *The Editor*, currently in production and likely headed for a fall 2014 release, is the group's most ambitious feature to date, with a \$150,000 budget and a cast that includes genre stalwart Udo Kier.

*The Editor* was conceived as part of a poster art show curated by *Rue Morgue* editor-in-chief Dave Alexander. The exhibit, titled *If They Came from Within: An Alternative History of Canadian Horror*, asked filmmakers and artists to invent a new history for Canadian genre cinema by creating movie posters for films that don't exist. Astron-6's giallo-inspired entry was realized by *Rue Morgue* design consultant Justin Erickson, and became the first tangible step on *The Editor*'s path to the screen.

It began as a conversation between Astron-6's Adam Brooks and Matthew Kennedy.

"I was telling Matt the bare-bones concept, which was just a title and some puns, and he started talking about the bizarre language that films like *House by the Cemetery* and *The New York Ripper* have," says Brooks, who is co-directing *The Editor* with Kennedy. "It's English, but written by Italians who don't speak English. It's a style of dialogue that is very, very specific to those old Italian movies, and we decided to make our own. *The Editor* is a giallo film for sure, but it's also a meta-movie about Italian films in general, which we have a lot of love for."

The pair came up with a story about a world-famous film cutter who is mangled in a gruesome editing accident. When several of his co-workers meet spectacularly gory fates, the editor becomes a suspect in their murders; even he isn't sure whether or not he's the killer. Besides Kier, Kennedy, Brooks and fellow Astron-6er Conor Sweeney, the film also stars musician Dan Bern



Adam Brooks and Udo Kier (as Dr. Casini) in the upcoming Astron-6 giallo *The Editor*.

and *American Mary*'s Tristan Risk.

*The Editor* began to take shape while the filmmakers were developing a number of other projects, including a sci-fi western, a time travel movie and a summer camp flick. They all seemed too ambitious, and Brooks was itching to get behind the camera. He and Kennedy decided to make a faux trailer for *The Editor*.

"It was just supposed to be a fun project between features," explains Brooks. "We started putting a lot of work into it, but we were making it up as we went along. I figured we should write full scenes for every little idea we had, so that if we ever decided to turn it into a feature, we'd have full scenes already shot."

Eventually, Brooks and Kennedy had a complete script. They applied for Telefilm Canada's new Micro-Budget Production Program and, much to their surprise, won. Those funds were later supplemented by an Indiegogo campaign that raised an additional \$18,000. According to Brooks, the result was a bankroll that is fifteen times higher than that of *Father's Day*.

Though the money has allowed the filmmakers to expand the scope of the production to include elaborate gore gags and even a lengthy car chase, casting Kier was their biggest coup. The German actor plays Dr. Casini, whom Brooks describes as a "gossipy doctor" at a mental asylum.

"I was quite intimidated because I admire him and his body of work so much," says Brooks, "but he turned out to be the most charming, gracious, funny and professional actor we have ever had the pleasure of working with. He brought a lot of ideas to the table, and all of them were good."

It'll take more than a bigger budget and a name actor to follow up *Father's Day*, though. With its graphic cannibalism, stop-motion monsters and father-raping demon, that film set a high bar for lurid content.

"I do feel a bit of pressure to one-up *Father's Day*," Brooks admits, "but I think we are ready to take that challenge. *The Editor* absolutely holds its own in terms of sex and violence."

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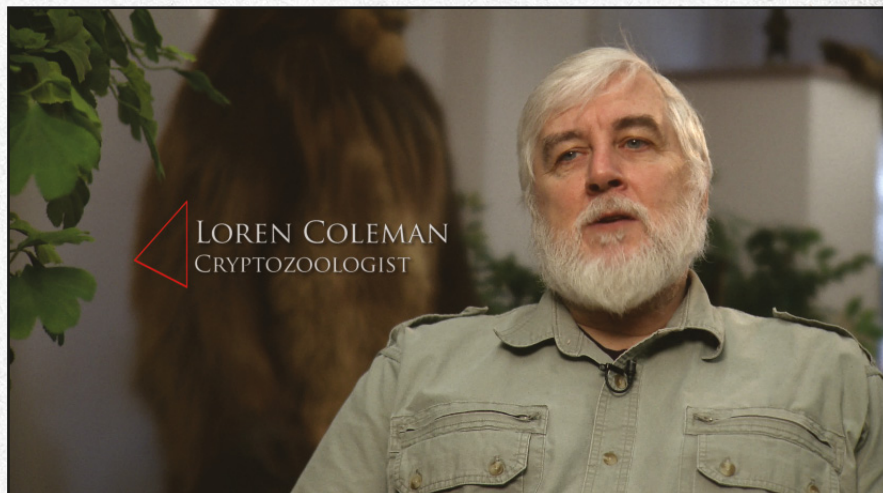
# MASSACHUSETTS' BRIDGEWATER TRIANGLE EXPOSED IN NEW DOCUMENTARY

Two filmmakers from Massachusetts are giving fans of the paranormal a haunting new lesson in geographical geometry. Writer, editor and director Aaron Cadieux and co-director Manny Famolare are currently screening their full-length documentary *The Bridgewater Triangle*, which focusses on an area in southern Massachusetts where a multitude of unexplained incidents and horrific crimes have occurred.

Most people are familiar with the infamous Bermuda Triangle – a region of the Atlantic Ocean near the southeastern tip of the United States where strange phenomena are said to take place – but it seems to have nothing on the lesser-known Bridgewater Triangle, an area that encompasses nearly 200 square miles and whose boundaries contain the Hockomock Swamp and the Freetown/Fall River State Forest. In addition to the unexplained disappearances and UFO sightings typically associated with the Bermuda region, the Bridgewater Triangle also has a history of reported encounters with ghosts, disembodied lights, killer dogs and monstrous man-like creatures. In addition, it seems to be a preferred location for satanic cult activity, which may have played a part in the high number of murders and animal mutilations that have taken place there over the years.

"I had grown up in North Dartmouth, about eight miles down the road from the Freetown State Forest, and through the years heard many of the strange stories that emerged from there," explains Cadieux. "In 2003 I produced *Inside the Bridgewater Triangle*, a 30-minute documentary on the subject. I knew I could never sell the film, but in the back of my mind I had always known that the Bridgewater Triangle would make a great topic for a feature-length documentary."

The concept of the Bridgewater Triangle was originally posited by renowned cryptozoologist and author Loren Coleman, when he wrote of it in his 1983 book *Mysterious America*. Coleman notes



Cryptozoo expert and author Loren Coleman coined the term "Bridgewater Triangle."

that Native Americans living in the area often regarded Hockomock Swamp as being "evil." In fact, the name Hockomock literally translates to "place where spirits dwell" in native Algonquian. During colonial times, residents reported strange incidents such as eerie sulfurous lights. In modern times, locals have come forward claiming to have witnessed Bigfoot-type creatures lurking in the area, huge black birds flying overhead, fiendish dogs prowling about and disc-shaped objects hovering in the sky. In the 1970s, heavily armed state police plunged into the woods with a pack of hunting dogs as they attempted to track down an upright hairy beast sighted by a handful of citizens. In the 1980s, the area took on a decidedly darker tone when officials began to receive reports about satanic activity taking place in the forest. Dead bodies started turning up as the triangle's notoriety grew.

In an effort to explore the legends, Cadieux joined forces with Manny Famolare, a local photographer who was equally fascinated by the phenomenon.

"There's something about the triangle that sets it apart from anywhere else," he says. "Many believe there's a negative energy there."

During the filming of *The Bridgewater Triangle*, the team was able to interview a number of people – including eyewitnesses, paranormal researchers and police officials – who cast an undeniable shadow on the patch of New England countryside. Among these were Coleman and retired detective Alan Alves, who spent much of his career investigating satanic activity in the Freetown State Forest region.

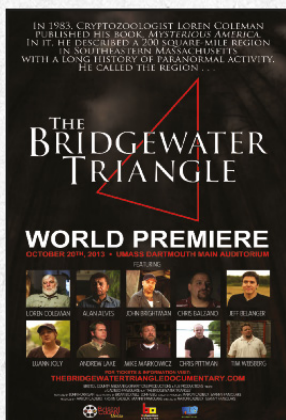
Even Cadieux, who approached the subject with scepticism, can't deny the phenomenon. "I've always been a sceptic when it comes to the paranormal, but there were stories featured in the film that really made me take a step back and wonder what's really going on in the triangle."

The documentary premiered in October at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, where a packed house of 750 people viewed the film.

"The next step is a number of additional local screenings," says Cadieux, "followed by a run in film festivals. We hope to pick up a distribution/broadcast deal along the way."

Follow the progress at [thebridgewatertriangle-documentary.com](http://thebridgewatertriangle-documentary.com)

LYLE BLACKBURN



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# PONTYPOOL DIRECTOR RETURNS TO HORROR WITH *HELLIONS*



Filmmaker Bruce McDonald has been trying to move ahead with a sequel to his 2008 zombie film *Pontypool* for several years, but in the meantime, the director of rock 'n' roll road movies *Roadkill*, *Highway 61* and *Hardcore Logo* has returned to the genre with *Hellions*.

Scripted by Pascal Trottier (*The Colony*) and due out next fall, *Hellions* features Chloe Rose as Dora, an "unexpectedly pregnant" teen terrorized on Halloween night by three malevolent trick-or-treaters.

Calling from the film's Waterford, Ontario, set, McDonald, a fan of Ray Bradbury's 1955 short story collection *The October Country*, says he was attracted to Trottier's script because of its evocation of the late author.

"I was like, wow, this guy may not be channelling Ray, but it hit a direct chord with me in terms of my love for Ray Bradbury and my love for horror [and] Halloween."

Correcting a piece in *The Hollywood Reporter*, McDonald says that *Hellions* is not a "zombie thriller." Instead, the hellions are teens out on Halloween.

"But you come to realize these aren't ordinary kids," elaborates McDonald. "They have certain things that they can do, and they begin to give our girl Dora trouble. They're kind of demonic, possessed kids, I guess. They come from the underworld, minions of the big man."

McDonald met Rose on the set of *Degrassi: The*

*Next Generation*, for which he directed several episodes. He says he was looking for a child on the cusp of adulthood.

"There's that one year where you go out for Halloween where you think, 'I don't think I can be going out this year. I'm too old,'" says the filmmaker. "But you still want to go out. That's sort of the nature of the character. She's right on the edge of being a kid and feeling 'Oh, I'm a grown-up person.' It's that push-pull of 'I don't want to grow up / I want to grow up / I want to get the fuck out of here.'"

While *Hellions* is still in production as of this writing, McDonald says that while he'd like to make the movie "for the fourteen-year-old boy in me," it's going to be for adult horror fans.

"There are just some really nasty bits," he notes. "If I could make a pretty scary, spooky, disturbing film, I'd be pretty happy with that."

SEAN PLUMMER

## ENTRAILS

➤ The BBC has confirmed nine lost 1960s episodes of *Doctor Who* have been found in Africa. Philip Morris, director of Television International Enterprises Archive, traced the tapes to a relay station in Jos, Nigeria. The episodes star the second Doctor (Patrick Troughton) in stories titled "The Enemy of the World" and "The Web of Fear," neither of which have been seen for 46 years. The BBC has made them available on iTunes for \$9.99.

➤ Sir Christopher Lee has been honoured with a fellowship from the British Film Institute. The accolade was presented to the 91-year-old by Johnny Depp on October 19. On receiving it, Lee said, "It is a great privilege to be included amongst such a distinguished group of predecessors who have received this award." Previous recipients have included David Cronenberg and Tim Burton.

➤ Fox has pushed back the release date of *Frankenstein* to January 6, 2015. The movie, directed by Paul McGuigan, stars James McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe, with a screenplay written by *Chronicle* writer Max Lan-

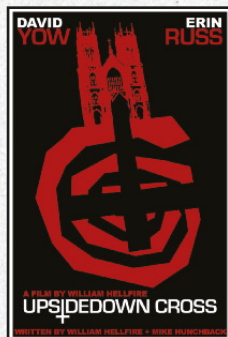
dis. The change in release date means it will no longer go head to head with Universal's *Dracula Untold*, which is set to open October 4, 2014. Originally, *Frankenstein* was to be released just two weeks later.

➤ Toronto-based band Lioness was recently so inspired by the music video made for their song "The Night" that they have decided to turn it into a feature film. Drummer and director Jeff Scheven came up with the initial idea of making a grindhouse trailer for a fake film about a group of girlfriends who go on a camping trip that goes horribly wrong. He's currently developing a script with bassist Ronnie Morris and plans for the film to go into production in early 2014.

➤ David Yow, of alternative band The Jesus Lizard, is starring the latest film from indie director Bill Hellfire, called *Upsidedown Cross*. When a drug-addicted prostitute returns to her childhood home, her mother seeks out an exorcist to treat

her erratic behaviour — but soon learns she may have let something evil into the house. The film also stars Tina Krause (*Erotic Vampire in Paris*), Erin Russ (*Pork Chop*) and adult film star Rick Savage. *Upsidedown Cross* is slated for an April release.

➤ After a screening of Michael Dougherty's *Trick 'r Treat* at the Egyptian Theatre in LA, it was confirmed a sequel is on the way. Dougherty told *EW* there was no script as yet, but he has a vision for the film. "I can definitely say that we'll be exploring Sam more and maybe getting into some backstory of who and what he actually is," he said. The announcement was made during a Q&A at Beyond Fest featuring *Trick 'r Treat* stars Dylan Baker and Brian Cox, plus producer Bryan Singer, who made a surprise appearance.



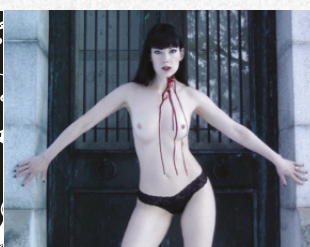
CHARLOTTE STEAR

## MONSTRO BIZARRO

A geneticist at Oxford University may have evidence that the yeti is actually a surviving breed of ancient polar bear. DNA expert Bryan Sykes recently announced findings of a year-long research project in which he analyzed alleged yeti evidence submitted by independent sources. Some of the best evidence came in the form of hairs — one from a yeti "mummy" in northern India and another found in South Asia. According to Sykes, the DNA from the two samples matched that of a 120,000-year-old polar bear jawbone found in the Norwegian Arctic in 2004. The data suggests that perhaps a form of these ancient bears survived and might therefore be responsible for some of the yeti sightings. Most witnesses describe the yeti as brown in colour (not white as popular culture suggests), and this particular polar bear is thought to have had a brown belt.

LYLE BLACKBURN

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# CORONER'S REPORT ★

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO.

140

This past July, a British woman sought medical care after returning from a Peruvian holiday; her symptoms included headaches, facial pain and a scratching sound inside her head. Doctors discovered a wriggling nest of maggots had hatched in her ear.

In 2007, Nicolas Cage purchased the LaLaurie Mansion, long purported to be the most haunted dwelling in New Orleans, but he was allegedly too spooked to sleep there.

Ohio resident Donald Miller was officially declared dead in 1994 after being missing for eight years (when he intentionally went off the grid); when he resurfaced, he petitioned the court to reinstate his social security number but lost, meaning in the eyes of the law, he remains dead.

Colwood, British Columbia's Hatley Castle, featured in the 1979 Canadian film *The Changeling*, has also been used as Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in the *X-Men* series.

A New York man was hospitalized with extensive injuries to his face and limbs after the toilet he was flushing exploded, riddling him with shrapnel. Officials deemed it a freak accident caused by water pressure.

According to *Clive Barker's A to Z of Horror*, author Shirley Jackson (*The Haunting of Hill House*) once claimed to be "the only practising amateur witch in New England."

A Papua New Guinea father has been charged with murdering his three-year-old daughter after he allegedly bit her neck and then proceeded to consume her blood and flesh before being caught in the act by passersby.

British artist Jessica Harrison caused a stir in 2010 when she debuted a project in which she constructed fake eyelashes out of the severed legs of houseflies.

Swede Micke Thomasson, suffering from a foot injury, was so heavily medicated on morphine that he failed to wake up when his dog, Laddie, ate three of his toes.

Earlier this year, a fan mailed singer/actor Jared Leto a severed ear, along with a note that asked, "Are you listening?" Leto not only posted a pic of the ear to Twitter, he later poked a hole in it and wore it on a necklace.

A Butte, Montana, city employee was formally reprimanded after she brought in ghost hunters to investigate her office at the health department, which she believed was haunted.

H.R. Giger's first art job was working as a draftsman at an architectural firm.

In October, two teenage girls were detained in a Victoria's Secret store in New York after store security discovered what they believed to be fetal remains in one girl's bag. Their suspicions were later confirmed by police.

COMPILED BY MONICA S. KUEBLER AND ALI CHAPPELL  
GOT A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT? SEND IT TO: [INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM](mailto:INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM)

## BODY HORROR

RE-ANIMATOR

ARTIST: Litos ([forbiddenimages.com](http://forbiddenimages.com))

◀ "This was done on a very good client of mine from California – very young talent who works in the Hollywood horror movie scene on makeup and creating body parts, zombies, etc. ... He flew in to get this sleeve of [Herbert West from *Re-Animator*], George Romero and other horror movie favourites."



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## THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX

### PAZUZU'S PERVERSITY



1.

**THE EXORCIST**  
HACKING AT THE HOLIEST OF HOLIES

2.

**THE EXORCIST III**  
CONFESSIONAL BOX BEHEADING

3.

**EXORCIST: THE BEGINNING**  
HYENAS: ONE; BULLY: NONE

4.

**DOMINION: PREQUEL TO THE EXORCIST**  
GRAVE ROBBERS ALTERED ON THE ALTAR

5.

**THE EXORCIST (EXTENDED DIRECTOR'S CUT)**  
SPIDER-WALK WITH ME

6.

**THE EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC**  
SHARON FIRES IT UP



## TORTURED TAGLINES

**THE BURNING (1981)**

IT WILL TAKE YOU FARTHER  
THAN FEAR.

## Necronomicomics BY JAY P. FOSGITT



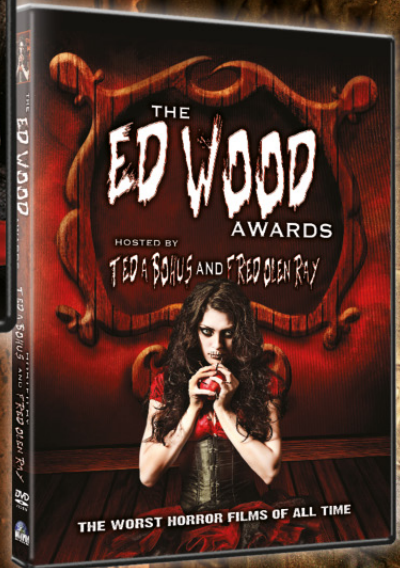
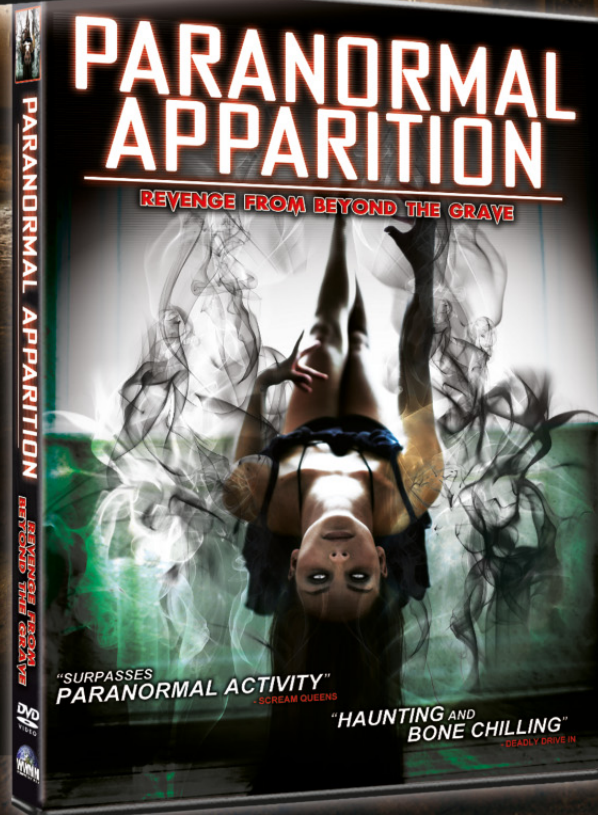
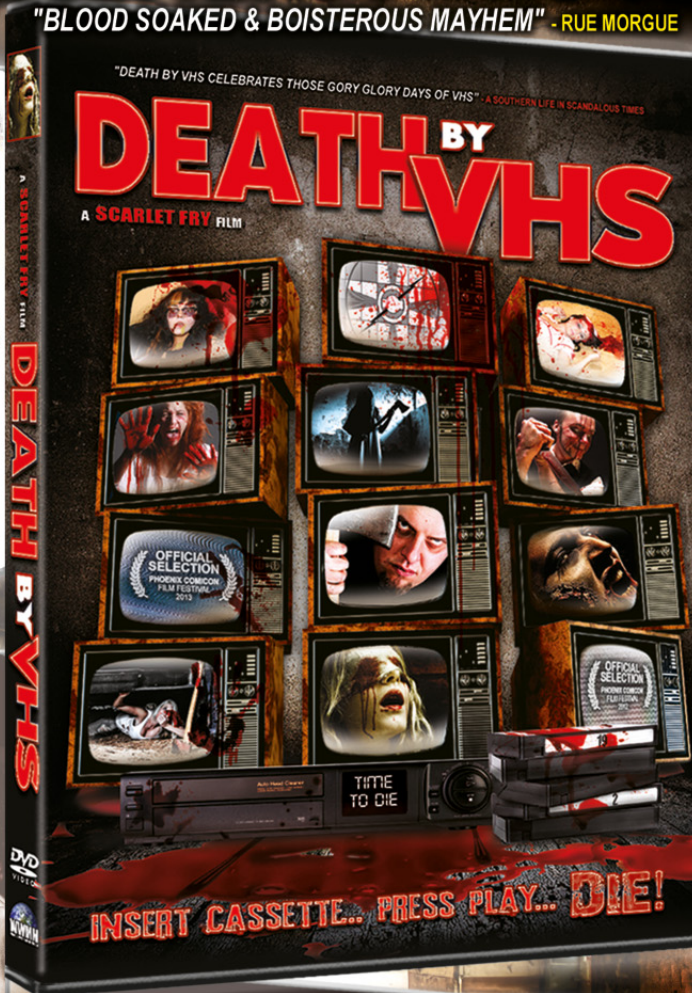
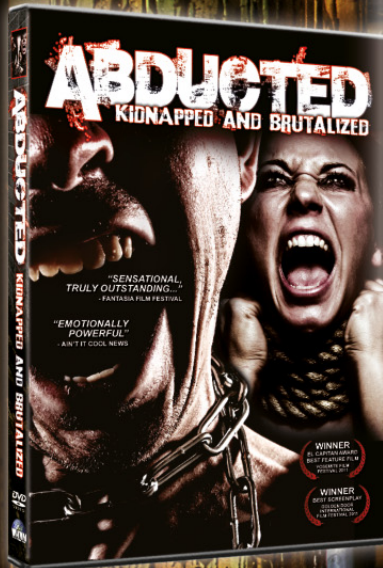
"HAS IT BEEN 30 DAYS YET? I'M FUCKIN' TIRED!"

See more of Jay's work at [jayfosgitt.com](http://jayfosgitt.com)



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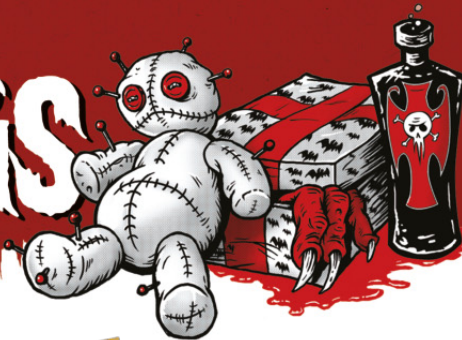


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## 2 BONES STACK GAME \$20

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## 3 WOMEN IN HORROR CALENDAR \$24.54

This 2014 calendar, described by its creator, British filmmaker Melanie Light, as "a showcase of talent – in front of and behind the camera," features twelve women currently working in the UK genre scene. All proceeds support Rape Crisis and the Sophie Lancaster Foundation.

Get a bloody eyeful at [etsy.com](http://etsy.com) (search WHCalendar2014).

## 4 DEXTER SERIES SET (BLOOD SLIDES) \$352.99 DVD/\$427.99 Blu-ray

Dismayed by the demise of *Dexter*? Well, delight in this release. Blu-ray and DVD sets are available in a replica of Dexter's blood-slide collection. There's also an Amazon exclusive set shaped like a victim's head. All include two new documentaries, interviews, featurettes and more.

Dream darkly at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



## CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

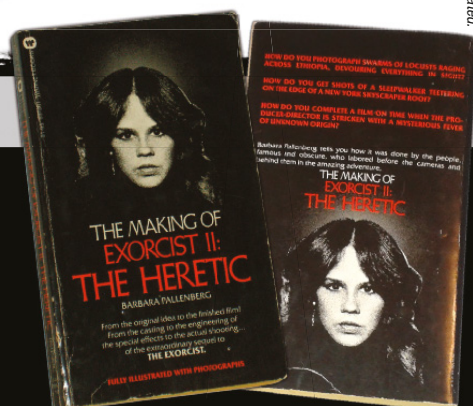
### THE MAKING OF EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC (Warner Books, 1977)

Before DVD featurettes, movie fans could learn all about the creation of such blockbusters as *Jaws* and *King Kong* by reading paperback "making-of" books. *Exorcist II: The Heretic* received such treatment in 1977. In it, author Barbara Palenberg provides a candid, revealing look – including sixteen pages of behind-the-scenes B&W

photos – at the problem-plagued production of John Boorman's visually fascinating but critically maligned follow-up to the 1973 masterpiece. Copies of the book go for between \$15 and \$32 online.

JAMES BURRELL

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ON THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
**THE EXORCIST**,  
DIRECTOR WILLIAM FRIEDKIN GIVES US A RARE, CANDID  
INTERVIEW AND SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ON THE FILM,  
POSSESSION, GOD AND, OF COURSE, THE DEVIL



IS THERE  
**SOMEONE**  
INSIDE YOU?

BY MICHAEL DOYLE





**M**ANY HORROR FILMS STRUGGLE TO PRESERVE THEIR POWER TO SHOCK AND UNNERVE INCREASINGLY DESENSITIZED AUDIENCES. Only the bona fide classics prove invulnerable to advances in special effects and performance technique, or resist being rendered quaint by the relaxation of censorship laws, evolving tastes and the inevitable duplicates that success and notoriety generate. Of course, *The Exorcist* appears to be exempt from this problem.

Perhaps the scariest horror film ever made, it remains almost certainly the most infamous. Indeed, upon its release on December 26, 1973, it was deemed responsible for inducing in its traumatized audience everything from fainting spells and vomiting to heart attacks and miscarriages, and sent multitudes fleeing from darkened theatres to seek salvation in churches. Based on William Peter Blatty's 1971 novel (which sold nearly 13 million copies domestically and sat on the *New York Times* Best Seller List for 57 weeks), it tells the now-familiar story of Regan McNeil (Linda Blair), a possessed twelve-year-old girl, and the desperate efforts of her mother, Chris (Ellen Burstyn), and two priests, Father Merrin (Max Von Sydow) and Father Karras (Jason Miller), to free her soul from torment through ritual exorcism.


Warner Bros had initially offered *The Exorcist* to such notable filmmakers as Stanley Kubrick (who insisted that he also be allowed to produce), Arthur Penn (who was preoccupied with teaching at Yale), Peter Bogdanovich (who declined the offer four years after making *Targets*, claiming he had no affinity for the genre), Mike Nichols (who was terrified of mounting any movie that depended so heavily on its child star) and John Boorman (who would later helm the much-maligned 1977 sequel, *Exorcist II: The Heretic*). Blatty, who was also acting as producer, lobbied the studio to hire 37-year-old William Friedkin, director of the recently released *The French Connection*. Put off by the Chicago-born filmmaker's apparent predilection for making "art films," executives were seriously considering awarding the gig to Mark Rydell (who had just made *The Cowboys* for the studio) when they attended a screening of Friedkin's gritty thriller, only to be mesmerized by its ferocity and energy. The rest, as they say, is history.

The incalculable influence of *The Exorcist* has reverberated ever since, not only in the myopic carbon copies promulgated by lesser directors (evident in Italy's lacklustre "pasta possession" cycle of the mid-1970s, along with such Hollywood efforts as *The Sentinel*), but also in the four sequels it has sired. Friedkin's epochal fear-film demonstrated – along with *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omen* – a newfound agreeableness on the part of major studios to embrace horror, pushing the genre to unprecedented heights (or stygian depths, depending on your point of view) of harrowing realism. It has since topped numerous polls as the greatest horror movie ever made and, in 2010, was selected by the Library of Congress to be preserved in the National Film Registry alongside the likes of *Citizen Kane* and *The Birth of a Nation*.

Friedkin – who incidentally was Michael Mann's first choice for the role of Hannibal Lecter in *Manhunter* – is as notoriously frank and fearless in his conversation as he is in his filmmaking. The first American we've ever heard use the word "bollocks" with such conviction (Friedkin has lived "off and on" in England and professes his love of British idiosyncracies), he discusses cinema with a passion and understanding that would make even Quentin Tarantino stumble for words. This should come as no surprise to those who have read his recent autobiography, *The Friedkin Connection* (which includes richly detailed remembrances of shooting *The Exorcist*) or digested his fascinating contributions to the special features on the anniversary Blu-ray of the film (see p.22).

Decades after altering the course of horror cinema forever with his hair-raising masterwork, the 78-year-old legend talks candidly with *Rue Morgue* about faith, fear and 40 years of *The Exorcist*.





“UNFORTUNATELY, HORROR HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO A LOT OF SCHLOCKMEISTERS WHO JUST WANT TO MILK IT DRY AND PUT A BUNCH OF STUPID SHIT UP ON THE SCREEN.”

WILLIAM FRIEDKIN

**What are your thoughts on *The Exorcist's* abiding legacy and its position as arguably the greatest horror film ever made?**

I don't think about it! [laughs] I'm certainly aware of it, but for *The Exorcist* to still be seen by new generations of people is of course an honour and something quite unexpected. I know that Warner Bros. has really taken good care of its legacy and that's not true of a lot of films that are justly called great films but don't receive the same kind of coverage, distribution or release. All the people that have taken over at Warner – and there must have been at least seven or eight heads of the studio since it first came out, as well as new advertising and publicity people – have kept the legacy of *The Exorcist* alive for all these years. That's because of magazines like yours and the people who read them that still hear a lot about the film and the reputation it's gained. They are curious and Warner continues to satisfy that curiosity.

**Before its release, did you anticipate that the film would provoke such ferociously strong reactions and condemnation from people?**

No, absolutely not.

**Yet many in Hollywood believed that William Peter Blatty's novel was unfilmable due to its profanity and explicit scenes of violence and sacrilege. What made you feel like you could attempt an adaptation?**

Well, because it's such a great timeless story. It touches on things that we don't deal with everyday, but that people are curious about. Even those who don't believe in God or an afterlife or in the power of faith are captivated by these enduring questions because we still have no answers. When the film first came out, it provided a lot of discussion on faith and the existence of good and evil in the world – even within a twelve-year-old child. It was an opening into something that is certainly greater than any of us can imagine, but I still tried to do the film as realistically

as possible. I was terrified when I read the book because of these mysteries it hinted at, but both Blatty and I never considered *The Exorcist* to be a horror film like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. I think that's a good film, but that wasn't what we were intending to do. I painstakingly made it almost as a documentary of the actual 1949 exorcism case that occurred in Silver Spring, Maryland, that involved a fourteen-year-old boy.

**That case was of course the direct inspiration for Blatty's novel.**

Yes, and I read a great deal about it myself. Blatty was asked by the Washington diocese to change the gender of the boy to a girl to protect the privacy of the family. There are only three cases that anyone who studies these matters seriously are aware of that the Catholic Church in America has determined to be authentic cases of demonic possession in the 20th century. The 1949 case was the last one and was widely written about at the time. *The Washington Post* had it as a front-page story and if you Google it you'll find a three-page article that details the whole investigation. The boy had been through every kind of internal and external medicine to find a cure for what was going on, but after medical treatment proved unsuccessful his family turned to the Catholic Church for help. They were in fact a Lutheran family and the Lutherans don't have exorcism. This was a last resort for them as they weren't a particularly religious family, but it seems to have worked. That young boy actually retired about eight years ago from NASA and eventually went back to Silver Spring where he has no memory of what happened to him as a child.

**During an interview with *Rue Morgue* in 2000, Blatty recalled that you told him in no uncertain terms: "I'm not here to make commercials for the Catholic faith." Why was that such an issue for you?**

There were many things in my original cut that came from Blatty's script that underlined for the audience the meaning of the story. As a practicing Catholic, Bill



felt these things were important, but I thought it was unnecessary to underline the meaning – as in the scene where Father Merrin explains to Father Karras during a break in the exorcism what the meaning of all this horror and despair is. Merrin says that it's meant to show us what horrible, worthless creatures we all are, but I felt that was already inherent in the story. It didn't need to be restated in dialogue between the characters in the same way it was in *Psycho* where the police psychiatrist comes out after this incredible movie and explains to the characters and audience what went on there with Norman Bates. I watch *Psycho* a lot, but when that scene comes up I shut it off. I hate it!

***That's not my favourite scene in Psycho either.***

Right, because you don't need a character underlining the meaning like that. So I removed that scene with Merrin and Karras talking and took some other things out too – much to Blatty's disapproval. Then, some 27 years after the original release of *The Exorcist*, Bill kept after me, saying, "Will you please just look at this stuff?" Warner Bros had said they would re-release the movie in the year 2000 in first-run theatres, with an advertising campaign, followed by a new DVD. Of course, that got my attention. Finally, I looked at all this rejected footage that I believed was largely overstatement and thought, well, this movie has achieved a great reputation for so long that I'm sure people won't mind watching an additional twelve minutes of it. I mean, it wasn't bad footage and Blatty had created this thing, and had always wanted those scenes reinstated. By this time I had mellowed, so I decided to put it all back in as "The Version You've Never Seen." But that version was actually my original cut of the picture that I had showed Blatty and he fell in love with. Now, I must add that although I'm not a Catholic, I strongly believe in Jesus Christ and his teachings. I don't particularly see a strong connection between Jesus' teachings and the modern-day church, but I think those words – as beautifully set down in the New Testament – are extremely inspiring, although difficult and almost impossible to live up to.

***Nevertheless, you've described yourself as an agnostic and define that as someone who believes that "the power of God and the soul are unknowable." How did that position***



***determine your approach to making The Exorcist?***

As I said, I acknowledge the power of God and the human soul, so it didn't result in any lack of commitment on my part to the story. Like the rest of us, I'm just a speck in the greater scheme of the universe and none of us know what any of the eternal truths are. And yet I still feel a powerful sense of faith just being out in the street or being with my family and the people I love. I'm not belittling anyone's faith, but there are any number of different faiths and who knows what the truth is? An agnostic is by no means an unbeliever, but I don't think these eternal truths are meant to be revealed to us. I don't deny them; I'm simply not given to understanding them. You hear about some of these obviously phony preachers that run around claiming this and that. Well, it may be their belief system but there really is no way of proving it. Of course in *The Exorcist*, Merrin and Karras do believe passionately in it and that's the great thing about Blatty's transcendent novel and the characters he created. He managed to perfectly illustrate the mystery of faith.

***If The Exorcist was released today, I suspect that the Iraq prologue would be quietly dropped by the studio to reach the scary scenes more expeditiously.***

They wanted to drop it back then [in 1973]! Even Blatty's own publisher wanted him to cut the prologue from his novel because they didn't understand it. Warner certainly didn't want



***Female Troubles:*** Regan (Linda Blair) spider-walks down the stairs in a scene restored for the re-release of the film in 2000, (top) William Friedkin directs Blair during one of the hospital sequences, and (opposite) Regan in the grip of Pazuzu.

me to film it, let alone travel to Northern Iraq to do it. I decided to shoot it because I felt that sequence set the whole mood and tone of the film with very little dialogue. It acts as a portent or forewarning of Merrin's future – and ultimately fatal – confrontation with the demon, and also establishes this overriding sense of a mystical, eternal evil. Today, that prologue would probably be considered too intellectual and perhaps not scary enough, but we were after a hell of a lot more than simply trying to scare people. I could have opened *The Exorcist* maybe 45 minutes later into the movie if we just wanted to make a pure horror film. I certainly didn't want to do that, as Blatty's story had so many layers of depth.

***The sequences where Regan is subjected to a battery of tests by doctors to discover the cause of her troubling behaviour are some of the most disturbing in the movie. Why do you think that is?***

Well, because it involves the violation of an innocent young girl's body by medical science, searching for answers that don't appear. Regan is put through all sorts of stuff and people do find those sequences very unsettling. The arteriogram, where they inject Regan [in the neck] to try and outline the arteries of her brain to determine whether or not there is brain damage, was said to be the single most frightening scene in the film according to an informal poll. I think audiences find that





**Satanic Source:** Regan shows her mother, Chris (Ellen Burstyn), the Ouija board, and (below) Father Merrin (Max Von Sydow) beholds the Pazuzu statue unearthed in Iraq.

upsetting because it's presented so believably and, of course, it's very real. It was all stuff that I discovered myself that wasn't depicted in Blatty's book. The arteriogram was a relatively new procedure at the time and, yes, it's extremely disturbing to watch.

**Another unnerving moment occurs when Karras sees the words "help me" have manifested on Regan's stomach. I once read an interview with makeup artist Dick Smith in which he criticized you for "destroying" that illusion by cutting to Jason Miller's reaction shot in the middle of it.**

Dick and I had – and still have – a wonderful relationship but he would be wrong if he said that, because it took so fucking long for those words to appear! [chuckles] You had to do a cutaway or you would just sit on the screen and study the effect. I venture to say that very few of the multi-millions who've seen *The Exorcist* have that same problem. I didn't know Dick ever felt that way and he certainly never said anything to me. You need that shot of Karras because it all plays through his reaction. I mean, you have to look at it this way: the entire attack on Regan is directed at Karras who, when we meet him, is on the cusp of losing his faith. That makes him an open target for the demon, who wants to cause this priest to view the world as being ugly and evil. I tried to have Karras witness most of the things that happen once he came into the story, so that it becomes his journey.

**The Exorcist has encouraged some wildly divergent readings. Observers have implied that Regan's possession represents an obscene form of teenage rebellion against her mother's efforts to infantilize her; and that Merrin and Karras are locked in some homosexual fantasy in which they must destroy Regan to consummate their love. Others offer a more restrained interpretation, suggesting the film exposes some generational divide and also consciously promotes a disgust of the human body. Do any of these analyses sit well with you?**

I don't pay attention to any of that stuff, Michael, I won't even read it. I know what you are saying is true, that all sorts of people

are coming up with theories as to what they believe the movie is really trying to say, but I haven't found any of these to be valid or worthy of repeating. *The Exorcist* is about what it's about: an innocent young girl who is suddenly overtaken with a firestorm of evil for no apparent reason. It certainly wasn't my intention to deal with any of that other stuff. All I tried to do was tell that story and I didn't find it to be a metaphor for sexuality or generational anxiety or any other damn thing. Some people feel compelled to discover another meaning in the movie, but there is no meaning other than what is in the film. Whatever *The Exorcist* means to you, the viewer, is exactly what it means.

**What about the continuing debate over the veritableness of the possession - whether it is in fact real or the product of some mass hallucination or neuroses on the part of the characters?**

In my view, demonic possession seems to be the best explanation for these events since medical science can't find another. Of course, as it says in the film, the victims' beliefs that they are possessed helps to bring about a cure. You have to believe it, you know? Certainly, the film goes through all the possible answers as to what might be wrong with Regan, which is exactly what they did in the 1949 case.

Nobody ever leaps to the conclusion that this girl is possessed; it's only after all medical, pharmaceutical and psychiatric treatments are exhausted that ritual exorcism is considered as a possible cure.

**Do you believe in the reality of demonic possession?**

My own personal belief is that the only thing that explains Nazi Germany is demonic possession on a mass scale.

Otherwise, how else could this highly skilled and intelligent race of people follow a madman into hell? I mean,





**WILLIAM PETER BLATTY'S LOST SCREENPLAY  
COLLECTION BRINGS US FIVE UNFILMED SCRIPTS  
BY THE CREATOR OF THE EXORCIST**

# COFFINS AND DEMONS

BY MICHAEL DOYLE

**I**N A CAREER THAT HAS SPANNED MORE THAN FIVE decades, novelist, scenarist and director William Peter Blatty has amassed a formidable body of work that runs the gamut from comedy (*A Shot in the Dark*) and surrealism (*The Ninth Configuration*) to theological thrillers (*Legion*). Renowned for almost single-handedly reviving the waning horror fiction market in 1971 with *The Exorcist*, his diverse writings are unified by their evocative imagery, eminently quotable dialogue and profound philosophical tracts. *William Peter Blatty's Lost Screenplay Collection*, a forthcoming five-volume limited edition set from Lonely Road Books (which has already sold out before its impending publication next spring), reaffirms the celebrated author's undoubted versatility. This quintet of unproduced scripts – available for the first and only time as deluxe signed hardcovers – restores the missing chapters of Blatty's creative history and provides a tantalizing glimpse of an alternate cinematic universe.

The first volume is an unused 1962 draft of the Elvis Presley vehicle *Viva Las Vegas*, which was rejected by the film's unofficial "Technical Advisor" Colonel Tom Parker for fear that its depiction of The King as an irksome casino lounge act would damage the singer's image. Following on from this is Blatty's fabled 1968 adaptation of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which was to have starred Kirk Douglas as McMurphy. It was a more faithful conversion of Ken Kesey's novel than the Oscar-winning 1975 picture, and Blatty considers the failure of this project to be his biggest career disappointment. Despite this, he eventually revisited the theme of men in an asylum with his 1978 tome *Twinkle, Twinkle, "Killer" Kane* (and again in its subsequent film translation *The Ninth Configuration*, which marked his directorial debut).

There's also *Mastermind*, a diverting Japanese variation on *A Shot in the Dark*, and *Handcarved Coffins*, a thriller based on an unfinished novella by Truman Capote in which Blatty once again addresses "the problem of evil." The unnerving story of a priest-turned-detective hunting a serial killer who dispatches victims in a variety of gruesome ways (one elderly couple is locked in a car with seven rattlesnakes injected with amphetamine, whilst another victim is spectacularly decapitated by steel wire); it was originally penned for director Michael Cimino (*The Deer Hunter*) in 1985.

However, of most interest to horror fans will be Blatty's reworking of his own 1996 novel *Demons Five, Exorcists Nothing* which is dated as recently as June 7, 2012. Described by the author as "A Christmas Carol for Hollywood," it's a searing, often remorseless attack on the fallacies and neuroses of the film industry. The narrative is constructed around the making of a horror film called *The Satanist* (clearly modelled on *The Exorcist*), and the efforts of a desperate director to maintain his own artistic integrity in the face of the most hellishly bizarre interference imaginable. Rich with scathing humour, this keenly observed satire ably demonstrates that the 85-year-old scribe has lost none of his righteous fire. 🔪

this was the country of Beethoven, Gerter, Schiller and Mann. Hitler, of course, was Austrian and was born in a beautiful town called Braunau, a couple of miles outside of Vienna. His house is still there by the way; it hasn't been torn down. I've seen it; it's a black log cabin located behind a movie theatre. There's no signage saying "This way to Hitler's house," but the locals know that's what it is. Again, I ask you, how could this enlightened civilization allow such evil to consume it? Yes, there were several reasons why the Germans went to war; they were a broke, defeated people after World War I, forced to pay reparations that greatly embarrassed them; there was high unemployment, and the country held little or no hope. Then along came this homeless guy who was living on the streets and who joined the Nationalist Socialist Party and rose to the very top of it. He told Germans they were the master race and led them into the darkest depths of hell. But why did they so willingly follow him into self-destruction? I've read as much as I can on this subject and we do have Hitler's writings, thoughts and speeches – as opposed to some of the enduring spiritual leaders – and we also have his image. He's clearly not some myth, but there is no explanation for why a nation would make as the centrepiece of its foreign policy the destruction of an entire race of people – if it were not possessed by demons. I truly believe that.

**You've identified one of the consistent themes of your work as being the constant struggle for your characters to let the good within them triumph over the evil. Why does this theme resonate with you?**

I believe that good and evil exists in all of us and that it's always a case of letting our bet-

ter angels emerge and prevail. I know there is good and evil in me and I've certainly seen it in other people. Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes in *The Gulag Archipelago* that "The battle-line between good and evil runs through the heart of every human being," and I suspect that includes Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Jr. and possibly even Jesus.

**Some may argue that you demonstrated that same duality during the making of *The Exorcist* by slapping priests and firing guns on set to achieve an authentic reaction from your actors.**

I never fired a gun with bullets, it was blanks. In fact, it was only on a handful of occasions – less than five – that I've ever done that. It was designed to get a certain response from the actors, a certain surprise. I wasn't the first director, nor will I be the last, to ever do that.

**In his book on *The Exorcist*, Mark Kermode suggests that you "played up" rumours of a curse after the death of actor Jack MacGowran from influenza shortly after he completed work on the film. What's your response to that?**

He's wrong, I never "played up" rumours of an *Exorcist* curse, although the idea of such a thing has been around almost since the beginning of [production on] the film. No, people like Ellen Burstyn played up those rumours, not me. I did everything I could to deny the existence of a curse and I don't accept the idea now. Yes, there were strange





# THE POWER OF BLU COMPELS YOU

## THE EXORCIST 40TH ANNIVERSARY (1973) BLU-RAY

Starring Linda Blair, Ellyn Burstyn and Jason Miller  
Directed by William Friedkin  
Written by William Peter Blatty  
Warner Bros.

Horror fans may find themselves asking one important question in deciding whether to purchase this latest version of *The Exorcist*: do you want to let Jesus or Warner Bros. fuck you? An exaggeration, sure – and apologies to Warner Bros. – but you see my point: the studio released a comprehensive Blu-ray of the scariest movie of all time back in 2010. What makes this 40th anniversary edition anything more than a cash grab?

There's no need to explain *The Exorcist* at this stage in the game. Are there any curious twelve year olds out there wondering whether director William Friedkin's adaptation of William Peter Blatty's 1971 best-seller is actually all that? Okay, go watch it. I'll wait...

Done? Changed your underwear? Okay.

*The Exorcist* has been released multiple times since 1973, most notably in 2000 when Blatty convinced Friedkin to reinstate footage the author felt was unwisely cut from the original release. Friedkin, employing modern technology, also put back in the infamous "spider walk" sequence.

As for this 40th anniversary edition, what's new? Warner's proprietary "Ultraviolet" technology lets you watch the film on computer, tablet or smartphone, in addition to television. There's also a hardbound excerpt from Friedkin's memoir, *The Friedkin Connection*, which details the director's experience of reading Blatty's book and deciding to film it.

A bonus disc contains two new featurettes: "Beyond Comprehension" has the now-85-year-old author detailing the writing of the novel and revisiting his alma mater, Washington, DC's Georgetown University. It provides fascinating insight into the novel's creation, including the former comic writer's decision to draw upon the recent death of his mother.

"Talk of the Devil," meanwhile, features a 1973 interview with Father Eugene Gallagher – the priest who introduced Blatty to the 1949 case of exorcism that piqued his interest in the subject. An interesting time capsule of the period, it provides insight into Blatty the artist.

Is this 40th anniversary edition essential? If you do not own *The Exorcist* already, then why not pick it up? It contains all the featurettes and commentaries from the 2010 edition, and the transfer seems identical. If you already own it, then the power of Christ may compel you to give this latest edition a pass.

SEAN PLUMMER



**An Unexpected Twist:** The famous special effect depicting Regan's head turning around 180 degrees.

things that went on but there have been even stranger and more troublesome events that have occurred on movie sets – like people dying during the course of shooting. Remember *The Twilight Zone* where a helicopter fell on Vic Morrow and a young Asian girl and killed them? Personally, I don't believe in curses, but I've only mentioned them because you've just asked me about *The Exorcist* curse – as many others have over the years. In answering the question I don't believe I'm playing it up. I could say, "Oh, what a load of bollocks!" Again, I don't really know, but I certainly see no evidence of it.

### May I ask your opinion of John Boorman's *Exorcist II: The Heretic*?

I haven't seen the whole film. I might have seen about eight to ten minutes of *Exorcist II: The Heretic* – or as we call it "The Hairy Tick" – and those eight minutes were some of the worst excrement I've ever witnessed on a screen. I was over at the Technicolor lab and one of the colour-timers invited me into the screening room there to watch some of it. As soon as I saw footage of this guy riding on the back of a fucking bumblebee, or whatever it was, that was it, I was out of there! *Exorcist II* is diabolic! It's despicable! I don't know if [Boorman] is a good director or he isn't, I really don't, but *Exorcist II* is worse than bollocks – it's shit! Pure out-and-out shite, Michael! [laughs]

### You briefly considered directing an adaptation of Blatty's official sequel, *Legion*, which was later released as *The Exorcist III*. Why didn't you commit?

I had no real interest in directing *Legion*. I had clearly said everything I had wanted to say about that subject in *The Exorcist* and really had nothing further to add on it. I simply couldn't do that film just to make a lot of money and hoist another load of bollocks on an unsuspecting audience. I haven't seen any of the other sequels and don't plan to.

### Did you catch last year's stage play of *The Exorcist* that starred Brooke Shields as

### Chris McNeil and Richard Chamberlain as Father Merrin?

Oh, it was horrible! It was terrible! Yeah, I saw it and it was dreadful. It was instantly regrettable and forgettable.

### What do you know about the forthcoming *Exorcist* television series?

I know nothing about it, but people have talked about a television series for many years. I think Blatty may have at one time even granted some rights to Morgan Creek, the company that made *Exorcist III* and *IV*. I have no idea what they are planning to do.

### Finally, you once said that if you could find a suitable project you would happily continue making horror movies forever. What attracts you to the genre?

The best horror movies like *Psycho*, *Alien*, *Onibaba* and *Rosemary's Baby* engage people on an emotional level. What audiences seek in any film is an emotional response – to laugh, cry or be scared – and a great horror movie, of which there are few, can accomplish all of that. Unfortunately, horror has fallen victim to a lot of schlockmeisters who just want to milk it dry and put a bunch of stupid shit up on the screen. I've enjoyed some recent ones like *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal Activity* that had interesting and unique concepts, and have helped to sustain the genre. I actually consider diverse films such as my movie *Bug* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* to also be horror movies. The character of Hal in Kubrick's film, the computerized intelligence that attempts to destroy the two astronauts, is very scary. I find *2001* terrifying because it's mysterious and involving in the same way that a good horror movie is. And Henri-George Clouzot's *Diabolique* is one of the scariest things I've ever seen. It's highly literate and sophisticated, because it crosses the line between reality and illusion. That whole prolonged sequence where the wife is menaced by this character that is supposed to be dead is just fucking great! If I could find horror stories like that, I would definitely do them every time. 🍷





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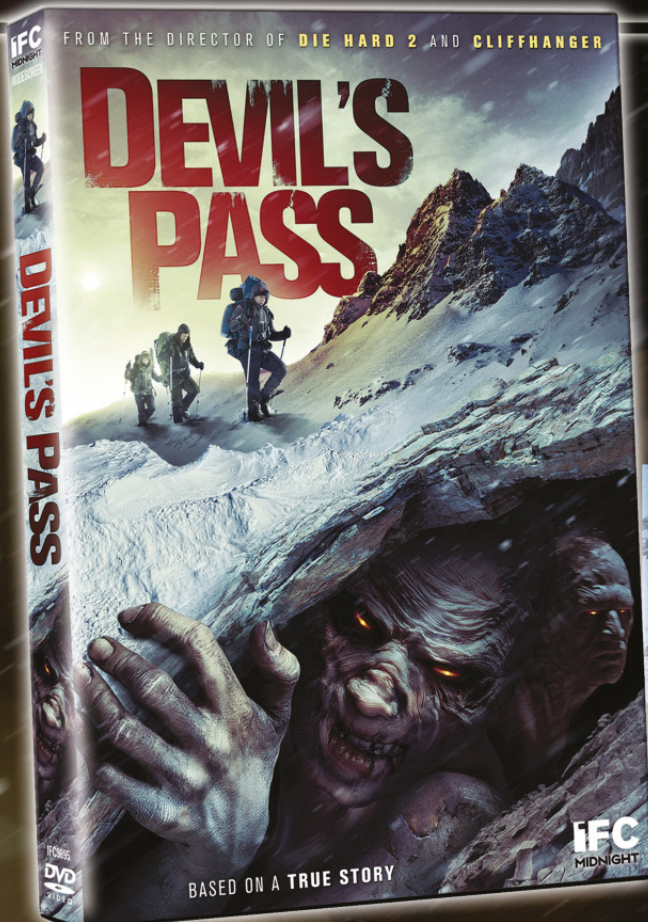
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WES CRAVEN RELATES THE FANTASTIC, SOMETIMES NIGHTMARISH  
STORY BEHIND THE MAKING OF **THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW**,  
HIS UNDERRATED MASTERPIECE OF VODOO HORROR



# The Blackest Magic

by  
MICHAEL DOYLE





**T**HE RELIGION OF VODOO (OR VODOU) HAS LONG BEEN FEARED AND MISUNDERSTOOD. ALTHOUGH PRACTICED IN REGIONS OF THE WEST INDIES AND BY THE CREOLES OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES, IT IS MOST SYNONYMOUS WITH THE ISLAND OF HAITI AND WAS IMPORTED INTO THE ANTILLES BY AFRICAN SLAVES DURING THE 18TH CENTURY.

Its complex rituals have been sensationalized by a succession of unsympathetic works – beginning with William Seabrook’s highly influential 1929 book *The Magic Island*, and continuing on through the sublime cinematic chills of *I Walked with a Zombie* to the nightmarish film noir of *Angel Heart*. Many of these stories trade on token elements such as ancestor worship, tribal sacrifice, possession and hexes with varying degrees of accuracy and subtlety, often mistakenly linking voodoo to Satanism or placing considerable emphasis on the raising of the dead.

Nearly 60 years after the release of Seabrook’s persuasive text, *The Serpent and the Rainbow: A Harvard Scientist’s Astonishing Journey into the Secret Societies of Haitian Voodoo, Zombies and Magic* was published. Written by Canadian ethnobotanist Wade Davis, this startling non-fiction account chronicled the author’s own efforts to identify tetrodotoxin as the active ingredient of a mysterious drug which induces “zombification.” This “magic powder” places victims in a state of paralysis whereby their metabolic rate is slowed to such an extent that they appear to be dead and are buried – only to be exhumed hours later as “zombies.” Originally used in Africa as a form of capital punishment if an offence had been committed against the community or priests, the drug was later utilised in Haiti during the Duvalier regime as a powerful political terrorist tool and a means of controlling people through fear.

Criticized for its scientific inaccuracies and dismissed by some literary critics as nothing more than an adventurous travelogue, *The Serpent and the Rainbow* was intriguing enough for producers David Ladd and Rob Cohen to acquire the property. Looking for a director with the strength of purpose and clarity of vision to bring the polemic tome to the screen, they offered the movie to Wes Craven, the man who had precipitated a million sleepless nights with such bloodcurdling classics as *The Hills Have Eyes* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

“David and Rob had seen *Nightmare* and liked it,” recalls Craven, now 74. “They then approached me to see if I wanted to read Wade Davis’ book and had any interest in the project. Sometime later it occurred to them that maybe they should see my most recent film, which was *Deadly Friend*. They hated it and told me during a meeting that if I was seen to be delivering a work like that they would fire me! I must say that I don’t blame them at all because *Deadly Friend* was not successful in any way. I told Rob and David, ‘Look, I know that film



was a mess but this project is very different and I’m going to make you a really good film.’ They were both like, ‘Okay, well, you better!’”

Entranced by the mysteries and intricacies of voodoo culture, Craven signed on without seeing a script. When he did eventually read the adaptation by Richard Maxwell and A.R. Simoun (the latter a pseudonym for Adam Rodman) he was im-

**THERE WAS A LOT OF  
STRANGE PSYCHOLOGICAL  
— AND MAYBE SPIRITUAL  
— STUFF TAKING PLACE DURING  
SHOOTING AND DURING  
PRE-PRODUCTION.**

*— Wes Craven*

pressed with the manner in which both writers had imposed a cinematic narrative on Davis’ robust scientific journalism – adhering to the book’s structure, but altering the names of some characters and concocting others. The script focussed on Dr. Dennis Alan (Bill Pullman playing a fictional equivalent of the author), an American anthropologist who is sent to Haiti by a pharmaceutical company. His objective is to bring back a sample of the “zombie powder” in the hope that it will revolutionize the science of anesthesiology.

Arriving on the island, Alan meets Marielle DuChamps (Cathy Tyson), a doctor and voodoo priestess, who introduces him to a local man named Christophe (Conrad Roberts), a vacant-eyed victim of the powder who wanders the cemetery at night. Unfortunately, Alan’s presence draws the invidious attentions of Dargent Peytraud (Zakes Mokae of *Dust Devil*), a bokor who doubles as the head of the Tonton Macoutes, Haiti’s dreaded secret police. Peytraud is disturbed by the scientist’s investigations and sends one of his cohorts out to contaminate him with the powder. Alan “dies” and is buried alive, but is rescued by Christophe, leading to a final confrontation with Peytraud that risks not only his life, but his eternal soul.



**The Science Of Superstition:** (from top) Louis (Brent Jennings), Dennis (Bill Pullman) and Marielle (Cathy Tyson) gather the ingredients to make zombie powder, Dennis enters the realm of nightmares, and voodoo priestess Marielle.

“I thought [the screenwriters] did a good job, but as we began shooting in Haiti there was some rewriting,” admits Craven. “I usually do a pass on a script so there was a ‘director’s pass,’ let’s call it that. We felt the third act needed some work and Richard Maxwell actually went down to Haiti for a lot of that rewriting too. Then at a certain point Richard had to suddenly leave.”

When pressed for the reason why the writer unexpectedly fled the country, Craven is understandably reticent.

“There’s a story there and I



don't know how comfortable Richard is with it," he discloses. "What happened was Richard was interviewing the man who made the powder that makes people fall into a state that appears to be death. He told this guy that he would like to be initiated into voodoo sometime because Richard was interested in various things like Eastern mysticism. This guy turned to him and said, 'And then you will be!' Richard later went back to his hotel to do some writing but at a certain point he just stopped coming out of his room."

Concerned for Maxwell's well-being, Craven and Ladd arrived at his lodgings only to discover that the paranoid scribe would not permit them to enter. Finally, the two men convinced Maxwell to open the door and both were shocked by the rapid deterioration of his mental state.

"Richard was — I don't know what — completely spaced out and unshaven," Craven explains. "There was uneaten food strewn around the room that he had ordered in whilst trying to write. He had become unable to focus and we had to put him on a plane bound for Miami with somebody attending to him. His wife was waiting for him there but he didn't even recognize her. They travelled back to Los Angeles together and about three days later Richard suddenly snapped out of whatever state he was in. The last thing he could remember was this vodoun man saying to him, 'And then you will be!' It was very spooky."

This disturbing episode was to be the first of many, as a palpable atmosphere of disquiet settled on the production almost as soon as filming commenced on March 9, 1987. Sharing his producers' desire for authenticity, Craven agreed to shoot *Serpent* in Haiti (the first time he had lensed a film outside the US), but was appalled at the poverty and unsanitary conditions that greeted the company upon their arrival. As a cautionary measure against

illness, cast and crew took all meals at their hotel, but this did not prevent many of them from succumbing to mysterious bouts of nausea and vomiting. These complaints continued throughout much of the 30-day shoot, but things were about to get far more troublesome as countless members of the production reported experiencing terrifying hallucinations — including Bill Pullman who claimed to have seen a green cow with television screens for eyes!

"There was a lot of strange psychological — and maybe spiritual — stuff taking place during shoot-

**IN HAITI, THERE IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT REALITY SYSTEM AND THOSE WHO ARE IMMERSSED IN THAT REALITY AND THAT RELIGION CAN SEE AND DO THINGS.**

*— Wes Craven*

ing and during pre-production," reveals Craven. "People were seeing visions. One actor went up to the historic fort in Haiti that is located on top of this mountain and saw somebody from the [1791] slave revolution against the French riding in on a white horse, telling him, 'You and all your people will die!' I remember this actor rushing back into the hotel, calling his agent and saying, 'You must get me out of here!' So people were experiencing some deeply unsettling things."

In an effort to secure protection from whatever dark forces dwelt in Haiti, Craven and Ladd had travelled to the stricken country during pre-produc-

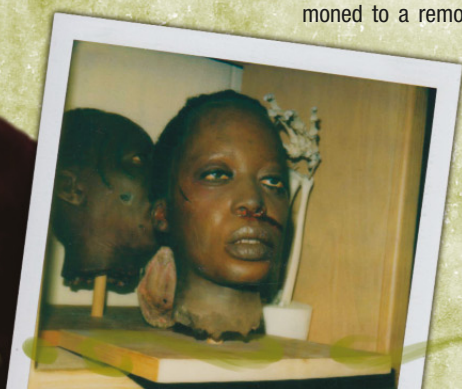
tion in order to meet with "the most powerful man in the world of voodoo." Their arrival at the Haitian slum in which this individual resided coincided with one of the island's frequent blackouts, plunging the ghetto into darkness. Director and producer were then led into a shadowy house where the priest was waiting for them.

"I remember this man was sitting in an armchair and had a silver pistol resting on his lap," recalls Craven. "The whole place was full of vodoun artifacts and was like a little church in a way because there were folding chairs in his living room and an altar had been made in the fireplace. There were also dolls with their heads cut off hanging upside down, so it was very bizarre. This man had asked for us to bring him some gold jewellery the next time we came and in return he would give us protection. When we arrived back in Los Angeles we made a shopping trip to Beverly Hills to buy these gold necklaces that were just coming into favour with men. At one point the clerk asked, 'Is this for a young lady?' We said, 'No, actually it's for a voodoo shaman.' He didn't ask any more questions after that!"

After purchasing the jewellery, Craven flew back to Haiti for principal photography. He presented his offerings to the all-powerful priest, who then draped them around the severed doll heads in a bizarre ritual designed to ward off malevolent spirits. The filmmaker freely admits that shortly after the ceremony was completed he did indeed feel strangely invulnerable — if only because he was in the presence of a man whose fearsome reputation greatly preceded him.

"Nobody was going to mess with somebody he said was protected," Craven insists, still marvelling at the surreal experience. "There is something that the human mind can do with reality that can make it into various things. In Haiti, there is a completely different reality system and those who are immersed in that reality and that religion can see and do things. They can be possessed and affected by people that are putting spells on them in a way that Western people cannot be. However, if you are there for a certain amount of time you do start to feel that perhaps your mind could be invaded."

Seeking to further ingratiate himself with the local communities and acquire as much knowledge as possible, Craven attended several religious ceremonies, but the memory of one in particular still haunts him. After receiving a late-night phone call from a contact in the vodoun world, Craven, producers Ladd and Doug Claybourne and production designer David Nichols were all summoned to a remote



Dargent Peytraud (Zakes Mokae) is confined to his own torture chair, and (inset) severed heads created by FX artist David Anderson.



area in the Haitian countryside where people were congregating around bonfires and a cluster of grass thatch-huts decorated in devotion to various gods. The filmmakers were received warmly by the inhabitants, although the festive atmosphere was about to turn grim.

"We were led into one of these huts where animals were tethered and all sorts of music and drums were playing," says Craven. "I believe this particular ceremony was for the beginning of the planting season, which gives you some idea how benign it was. There was a pig there and it was bumping against my legs as they were passing around homemade liquor and delicious bread right out of a stone oven. Then some guy untethered the pig, jumped on top of it and rode it around this hut, bumping into people. Then he stuck a knife right into this squealing animal's neck and cut its throat. We just watched it die."

The blood was then emptied into buckets before a priest offered some to the startled Americans as a ceremonial beverage. Perhaps reading their uneasy expressions, the shaman did not force them to drink — something Craven remains thankful for — despite the fact that it can be dangerous to refuse such a gesture. "I didn't drink any blood," he asserts, "but the pig was cooked and a couple of hours later we were eating pork, so it was a very primal scene."

Such adventures educated Craven in the minutiae of Haiti's sectarian customs, which have been shaped over its turbulent history. The island had experienced numerous uprisings and attempted coups, and had only recently ousted the oppressive administration initiated in 1957 by Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier and maintained by his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" (with the assistance of their "bogeymen" enforcers, the Tonton Macoutes). Upon arrival, it quickly became apparent to Craven that the country was still precariously balanced, and that its traumatized citizens were now administering vicious retribution to any lingering traces of the deposed dictatorship.

"One of the first places we visited were cemeteries which had literally been torn apart," he explains. "Any grave that held the remains of a Tonton Macoute or anybody from the Tonton Macoute family had been ripped open, their bodies dragged out and thrown around the graveyard. It was very sobering. Until the exit of Baby Doc, the Tonton Macoute had been ruthlessly in charge of Haiti, but they had suddenly been forced out or were torn to pieces. Some had managed to escape or were in hiding, and there was now this giddy feeling on the surface of the people who had only recently won their freedom. They were delighted that somebody was there from America to give them jobs, but on the other hand they could very quickly snap into a fury if they thought you were disrespecting them."

The fraught reality of Haiti's social and political instability was given chilling illustration one day when the art depart-

ment ventured into a marketplace to purchase various artifacts to dress a set. Upon learning that a woman was in charge of the crew, locals reacted furiously and the situation deteriorated so swiftly that members of the production were threatened with immediate stoning. After resolving that tense encounter, the crew were embroiled in yet another potentially fatal incident during the shooting of the film's eerily beautiful candle-lit procession.

"We hired maybe 70 people as extras and all of them had told their friends and relatives that we were hiring down at this location," remembers Craven. "The next day we had three times as many people and they all wanted to be paid. We weren't planning for that many, but we finally came up with enough cash to pay them. However, on the third night I swear that every village for the radius of ten miles or more was there and we didn't have nearly enough to pay a fraction of those people. There were these communist agitators in the crowd that told the Haitians that we were just one more group of white people trying to exploit them. They picked up stones and shut us down quickly. Within seconds, David and I were totally enclosed by a crowd that were looking at us with murder in their eyes."

At that very moment, a priest came running out of a nearby church and shepherded most of the terrified crewmembers safely within a walled churchyard. Unfortunately for Craven and Ladd, they were left utterly exposed and were now at the mercy of the advancing throng. With all hope seemingly lost, Ladd did something which to this day Craven reverently describes as "ballsy."

"He climbed on top of a big bus, lit a cigar and actually bargained with this mob! He agreed to pay the people X amount of dollars, but we didn't have the money to pay them so they virtually kept half of our crew hostage. David and Rob desperately arranged for a Lear jet full of cash to fly from Miami and we paid off something like fifteen grand.

After it was all over, Doug Claybourne said, 'I was a door-gunner in Vietnam but that's the most terrifying time I've ever spent on

planet Earth!' I mean, we had soldiers as our bodyguards and they were literally batting people back with their rifle butts! It was a wild and crazy time. Shortly afterwards, we realised that Haiti was far too unstable and unsafe for us and we got out of there."

The next day, the entire production packed up and transferred to the less perilous nation of the Dominican Republic, where shooting resumed for a further two months. Craven was then able to concentrate fully on delivering several of *Serpen's* harrowing highlights, including the scene where a



**Island Fever:** (from top) The Cemetery Bride haunts Dennis, Anderson shows off his Cemetery Bride prop to Wes Craven, and Craven shares a break with producers David Ladd and Doug Claybourne.



catatonic Alan is buried alive by Peytraud (who, in a ghoulish touch, places a huge tarantula in the coffin to keep him company). This skin-crawling sequence, which mercilessly unites two of the greatest human phobias, presented Craven with a series of technical challenges, namely the construction of a coffin that was open on one side to allow the camera access.

"The interior of that coffin was certainly the smallest set I've ever worked on," he professes. "The difficulty was being able to see the character, but at the same time maintain the sense of being completely confined. It was going to be totally dark in there and how do you film without any light? There was a certain amount of cheating we did. Mostly it was a matter of getting shooting angles that allowed you to see Bill, but didn't reveal that you were outside the plane of the coffin itself. Bill could mentally get himself into these horrific situations in a way that was completely believable. Obviously, he was very game in having the tarantula crawl over his face like that, which can be extremely frightening."

Perhaps equally unnerving is the sadistic performance of Zakes Mokae as Peytraud, a character not featured in Davis' book but devised to be a more formidable antagonist for Alan and a symbol of the terrorism that existed in pre-revolutionary Haiti. The sequence where the bokor remorselessly tortures Alan – culminating in Peytraud hammering a thick nail through the anthropologist's scrotum – is excruciating to behold. ("My strongest memory of shooting that scene is Bill saying to Zakes, 'Now you be very careful!'" chuckles Craven). However, the director professes that the tragic and painful realism Mokae invested in the role was certainly no laughing matter.

"Zakes was a very gentle man, but he had a terrible story about his early life. He had come from South Africa during Apartheid and his brother had been imprisoned and hanged in his cell. Zakes was also beaten and questioned, and at one point, hung out of a fourth-storey window in a police station by his ankles. He was told several times that they were about to drop him but, finally, they hauled him back inside, beat him some more, then let him go. Zakes had experienced the same kind of terrorism that he was [enacting with] that character. I don't think a man who hadn't gone through all that could have played that role the way he did."

Returning to the US, Craven began editing his footage, whittling the picture down to 98 minutes from his initial cut of three hours. He then at-

tended several test screenings in an attempt to gauge audience reaction, but was disturbed by the feedback he received, which revealed the test audience felt the film "lagged" at the end. Just as Warner Bros. had done two years earlier on *Deadly Friend*, the producers quickly decided to shoot some additional scenes in Los Angeles in order to beef up the film's "problematic" third act.

"You know, it's always been a fight in my career to control – or not be able to control – the endings of my films," Craven laments. "[*Serpent*] was the first time I had a chance to do a more unified studio film since it was just David and Rob as producers. I was still not in a position to control my ending, but either I shot the new material or they would have hired somebody else to do it. I tried not to betray the realities of the story. Looking back, I wish we didn't have some of that hallucinatory stuff at the end, but I must tell you again that, at one point, Haiti itself was pretty hallucinatory. So, in a sense, those added moments were authentic."

Predictably, as soon as *Serpent* slithered into theatres on February 5, 1988, some critics attacked Craven for abandoning the delicately evoked atmosphere of the film's opening hour in favour of an explosion of special effects. The final battle between Alan and Peytraud takes place in an internal dream-world of pyrotechnics, animated furniture and heads being torn off. Although the "rubber reality" narrative had served Craven well on *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the reaction to Peytraud's transformation from barbarous policeman to horribly

burned, supernatural monster was too much for some, with one critic labelling the character "a blaxploitation Freddy Krueger." Although such comparisons irritate Craven, he concedes that *Serpent* ultimately suffered from "conflicting visions" over exactly what it was meant to be.

"There were various voices that wanted it to be different things – a religious story, a love story, a political thriller, a horror film," he notes. "I think Wade Davis would have loved it to have been a cinematic version of his book. There were also people in Haiti that helped with the research who wanted us to make a revelation of the voodoo religion and nothing else. Rob Cohen was looking for something that was commercially successful because he had to answer to the studio. Everybody had their own vision of what the film should or could be. As a director, you try to address the wishes and thoughts of all these voices but still do something that is your own."

Craven, who is currently collaborating with Steve Niles on the five-issue comic book *Coming of Rage*, remains proud of the movie, citing it alongside *Nightmare* as perhaps his best work. Not only did it achieve the look and feel of an epic horror film on a modest budget, it bravely embraced a diverse range of difficult subjects from the tangible (politics, history, science) to the ineffable (religion, gods, the supernatural) – and the experience of making it has clearly marked him.

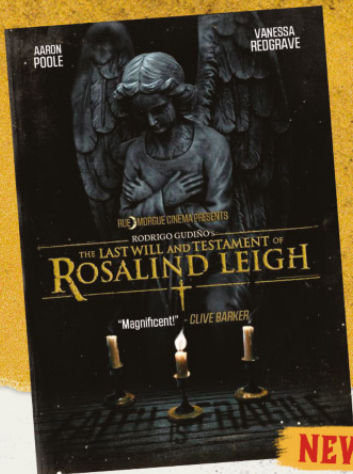
"My sense was that not too many people saw *Serpent* at the time it came out, but it did earn respect because of the breadth of its subject matter. People could see that it was made with a consideration for the conflicting religions, the history of the place and its people. More than that, we even put our own physical safety on the line in Haiti. We chose to shoot there even though we knew it would be extremely dangerous, but that was the commitment." 🐍



**Coffin Bill:** Pullman is filmed inside the specially constructed coffin for the scene where his character is buried alive with a tarantula.







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BRIAN CLEMENS HELPS US LOOK BACK ON HIS AMAZING CAREER

# LOOK ON THE DARK SIDE OF LIFE

BY  
DAVE STEWART



**B**RIAN CLEMENS IS BEST KNOWN AS THE CREATIVE MIND RESPONSIBLE FOR BRITISH SPY SERIES *THE AVENGERS*, but the prolific writer also is one of the most important figures in horror, thanks largely in part to *Thriller*. Not the Michael Jackson music video or the Boris Karloff TV series of the early '60s, this *Thriller* was a compendium series that premiered on ITV in the UK on April 14, 1973 and ran for three years. Developing a loyal cult following, even today its opening credits alone send shivers down the spine. But the iconic show is only one part of a career filled with macabre storytelling that stretches back nearly 60 years.

While working as a copywriter at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in London in 1955, Clemens sold his first screenplay to the BBC, which brought him to the attention of the Danziger Brothers (Edgar J. and Harry Lee), who produced crime melodramas at the time. Clemens wrote a number of screen and teleplays for Danziger Productions Ltd., most with lurid titles such as *The Depraved* (1957) and *Moment of Indiscretion* (1958). Then, in 1960, he was assigned an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

"The original Poe story runs to about three pages, virtually no more than an anecdote," says the 82-year-old Clemens. "My task was to flesh it out with character and incident."

In the resulting Ernest Morris-directed film, Clemens developed a love triangle and added significant touches such as having the floorboards under which a body is buried rise and fall to the imagined heartbeat of the corpse.

After bringing *The Avengers* (1961-1969) to the small screen, Clemens returned to horror in 1970 by writing and producing the feature *And Soon the Darkness*, which tells the story



of two young British women being stalked by a psychopath while cycling through the French countryside.

"The idea sprang from roads I had travelled in France and the USA," he recalls. "Long, straight roads on which you could go for miles and miles without seeing another car, dwelling or human being. What would happen, I wondered, if I should break down here? Who would help?"

Directed by Robert Fuest (both *Dr. Phibes* films), the film stars Pamela Franklin (*The Legend of Hell House*) and Michele Dotrice (*The Blood on Satan's Claw*). In telling the story, Clemens relied on several scenes with minimal dialogue or in French without subtitles to add to the viewer's sense of isolation. When her cycling companion disappears, we empathize with the fear and frustration of Franklin's character through to the film's climax. (A forgettable 2010 remake was directed by Marcos Efron, and stars Karl Urban and Amber Heard.)

"The rural French, with old ladies in black and looking like witches, are a deeply suspicious lot even now in the modern age," says Clemens. "I began to wonder about being in trouble in these circumstances, and not being able to even speak the language. I told [co-writer] Terry Nation about this and together we blocked out a story on a Friday afternoon. When I got home, I couldn't switch it off, and sat down at the typewriter. Then, over the space of one weekend, I wrote the whole screenplay. I put a copy on the studio head's desk on Monday morning. He read it, liked it, and said, 'If you can cast it right, we'll finance the making of it.'"

Next for Clemens was *See No Evil* (a.k.a. *Blind Terror*, 1971), starring Mia Farrow and directed by Richard Fleischer (*Soylent Green*). "It all began with an idea about a woman who is blind and in a house in which all her family have been murdered," recalls Clemens.

He and Fleischer were able to wring maximum suspense out of the concept by extending a scene so that Farrow's visually impaired character, assuming everyone else on the premise to be asleep, spends the night alone in a house filled with corpses. It's not until the next morning that she discovers their fate and a clue to the killer's identity, a bracelet bearing the name Jacko. She then sets out to save herself by identifying the killer. The tale showcases Clemens' talent for delivering a strong central concept, a playful sense of humour, and twists that take the story into completely unexpected territory.

"I'm not sure about the process," he says of creating plot twists. "I just like a movie to grip and, just when it might be running out of steam, I look for another little frisson to keep the viewer involved. In other words, I want to grab them by the throat at start and end. In between I try to grab them by the heart every fifteen minutes or so. If there is sex involved, then by the genitals! Best of all, I try to grab them by the emotions and the brain all the time; take sex and violence off the screen and put it back where it belongs, in the mind of the audience. They will make it much sexier or violent."

In many ways, elements from both *And Soon the Darkness* and *See No Evil* predate tropes that would be exploited in a few years when the slasher film came into vogue. Both feature an unseen but always lurking presence ready to strike his prey at any opportunity, and the set piece from *Blind Terror* would be mimicked many times as countless Final Girls discovered their friends' bodies strewn about any number of locations.

With some edgier features under his belt, Clemens made his foray into Hammer productions, which he became familiar with while *The Avengers* was shooting at the same studio as the famed company.

"One day I was having lunch and Jimmy Carreras [founder of Hammer] et al. were at the next table discussing ideas," recalls Clemens. "I suddenly came up with one: why not make *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*? He changes into a woman! We fell about laughing, but as I left the table Jimmy beckoned me over to say, 'Could you drop by at Hammer House on Wednesday?'"



**Life Of Brian:** (clockwise from top) Michele Dotrice in *And Soon the Darkness*, stop-motion Kali in *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, Dr. Jekyll (Ralph Bates) in *Dr. Jekyll & Sister Hyde*, and Mia Farrow and Brian Rawlinson in *See No Evil*.

That was two days away, and I said yes. I got to Hammer House, entered their creaky elevator, and ascended. As the lift rose I saw outside Hammer offices a huge poster advertising the upcoming *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*! I hadn't put forward a single thought or written a word yet, but already they were selling it."

Directed by Roy Ward Baker (*The Vampire Lovers*, *Scars of Dracula*) and co-produced by Clemens, *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971) features Ralph Bates (*Taste the Blood of Dracula*) as the ill-fated scientist and Martine Beswick (*One Million Years B.C.*) as his murderous feminine alter ego. Adding a wry 1970s sense of humour to the proceedings, Clemens' playful approach works well in *Sister Hyde*. He even manages to audaciously sneak real-life villains Jack the Ripper and body snatchers Burke and Hare into the mix. The project is classic Clemens, as it marries his love of subversive horror and subversive humour.

"It pays to be half Irish," he jokes. "My mother was an O'Grady, and I never take anything very seriously. Always look on the bright side along with Eric Idle [a reference to Monty Python's *Life of Brian*]. I think every screenplay benefits from a modicum of humour, because that is what life is like. Some of the most horrendous situations – the trenches in WWI, almost anywhere in WWII – [are] always alleviated by a bittersweet, ironic moment."

His work completed at Hammer for the time being, Clemens was then hired to write 1973's Ray Harryhausen project *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, directed by Gordon Hessler (*Scream and Scream Again*), and starring John Philip-Law (*Danger: Diabolik*) and cult icon Caroline Munro (*Maniac*).





"Ray had a one-line plot and a short list of monsters he wanted included," notes Clemens. "The rest was up to me. Ray's rhythm was mine, and simpler to achieve because he had a list of monsters to use, although the figurehead was my invention."

But television was calling the writer back, and he embarked upon his most ambitious horror project, *Thriller*. Unlike *The Avengers*, however, this show would feature no returning characters and no series-long plot-line to recall from week to week. It would be broadcast in an anthology format and focus on the macabre. Each episode would follow a simple and effective formula: an attention-grabbing prologue, followed by *Thriller's* signature opening credits of a blood-red background surrounding eerie fisheye images, accompanied by unforgettably jarring theme music from frequent Clemens collaborator Laurie Johnson. Then, over the next 60-plus minutes, viewers would be immersed in a story featuring possession, a haunting, devil worshippers or, more often than not, a psychopath.

Amazingly, Clemens created the stories for all 43 official episodes (an unrelated 44th episode, "Who Killed Lamb?", was also broadcast under the *Thriller* banner) and wrote an incredible 38 scripts.

"I was trained well by Danzigers for whom I would write an 80-minute second feature within ten days," says Clemens of how he became so prolific. "TV episodes took a full five. They gave me the best piece of advice that has served me through writer's block on many occasions: there is no mystique to writing; it is simply arse to chair, pen to paper. That still serves me well today."

He feels that among the most successful episodes were "I'm the Girl He Wants to Kill," which features a woman trapped alone with a psychopath in an office building after closing; "Someone at the Top of the Stairs," which tells of two women who rent a room in an old house complete with odd neighbours and a mysterious attic room; "Screamer," which follows the tragic aftermath of a woman who is violently attacked, only to have her attacker return; and "A Coffin for the Bride," a noirish tale that turns the table on a man who marries and murders well-to-do widows. Of the latter, Clemens notes, "if it hadn't been just a *Thriller* episode [lead actor

Helen] Mirren would have won an acting award." Mirren is just one name on an impressive list of actors and genre favourites to appear throughout *Thriller's* run. Others include Bob Hoskins, David Warbeck, Jenny Agutter, Lynda Day George, Christopher George and Ingrid Pitt. On top of this, some of *Thriller's* installments were clearly the basis for feature films. Among the movies derived from the show's episodes include *What Lies Beneath* (2000), from "Possession"; *Silver Streak* (1976), from "Night Is the Time for Killing"; and *P2* (2007), from "I'm the Girl He Wants to Kill."

Clemens says the appeal of the show was simple: "I like to think [it was] its quality, plus the fact that it did exactly what it said on the label... it thrilled."

In the midst of *Thriller's* original UK broadcast,



IT DID  
EXACTLY WHAT  
IT SAID ON  
THE LABEL...  
IT THRILLED.  
-BRIAN CLEMENS

Clemens returned to Hammer for his next film, and his sole directing credit to date: *Captain Kronos – Vampire Hunter* (1974), starring Horst Janson and Munro again. *Kronos* is a vampire hunter who travels to wherever vampires plague the locals. When a friend summons him to his village, *Kronos* comes face to face with a vampire who drains his victims not of blood, but of their youth.

"To prepare, I watched a raft of Hammer films only to find that they were almost the same plot: vampire attacks girl, Peter Cushing investigates, and *Dracula* – Christopher Lee – ends up with a stake through the heart," Clemens remembers. "Also, the most interesting character is the villain. With *Kronos* I sought to change all that. I thought it worked, and some 30 years on it seems I was right; *Kronos* has become a cult movie."

In 1980, Clemens' genre career took another turn when he worked with Walt Disney Pictures as the primary writer of *The Watcher in the Woods*. Based on the novel by Florence Engel Randal, *Watcher* tells the story of an American teenager (Lynn-Holly Johnson) in England who is drawn into the mysterious disappearance of her ominous landlady's (Bette Davis) daughter years earlier.

There's a generation of kids who fondly recall being traumatized by that film. In fact, at the time of its release *Watcher* was criticized for being too frightening for one of the company's releases.

"I think it was within the limits of what kids find scary," protests Clemens. "They *like* to be scared."

The screenwriter went on to pen scripts for numerous successful television series, including Hammer's *House of Mystery and Suspense*, *Remington Steele* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and movies such as *Highlander II: The Quickening*. At the time of our conversation, he had just finished writing his latest stage thriller, *Murder Weapon*, and his film *Infamous* was in pre-production in New Orleans. A big-budget version of his crime series *The Professionals* was also due to begin shooting. In 2010, he received a true honour when he was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to broadcasting and drama.

Given his legacy, it's little surprise that Clemens has strong opinions on modern genre stories.

"I think the horror has gone out of films because they are now too specific," he laments. "They might as well just record events in an abattoir. Nothing is left to the imagination to the extent that the audience's imagination is atrophying, dying out. The day of Hammer films has gone. Everything has to be so big these days, and far too long. I loved the days of an 80- to 90-minute feature. ... But, back to Eric Idle. I still look on the bright side. I still tutor young people, and there is a hell of a lot of talent out there, but you have to have been there to recognize and harness it. I'm trying." 🐼

Tuned In To Terror: Julie Sommars in the *Thriller* episode "I'm the Girl He Wants to Kill."



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PETER STRICKLAND TAKES US INSIDE **BERBERIAN**<sup>SOUND STUDIO</sup>, HIS GIALLO-THEMED FILM THAT EXPLORES THE ART OF MAKING YOU SQUIRM



**A** ficionados of both Italian horror films and movies about moviemaking will find a lot to love in Peter Strickland's *Berberian Sound Studio*.

Set in the mid-'70s, it stars funny-faced British character actor Toby Jones (*The Hunger Games*) in the role of Gilderoy, a middle-aged, mild-mannered sound mixer who likes to work on placid nature documentaries in his native England.

He travels to Rome expecting to mix a nice little film about riding horses but, much to his shock and awe, *Equestrian Vortex* turns out to be an ultra-bloody, uber-misogynistic gothic horror about the persecution and torture of witches. Not understanding a word of Italian and never having worked on a horror film before, the nebbish Gilderoy is quickly swallowed up by a storm comprised of macho producers, screeching scream queens and the film's egomaniacal director, a delusional hack who insists that he doesn't make horror movies, he only makes "Santini" pictures!

"Santini's a bit like a wannabe Argento," British director Strickland tells *Rue Morgue*. "He's too lazy and too much of a playboy. He's not talented enough, but I guess he confused his giallo with his gothic horror."

It turns out that the wannabe auteur is caught up in the Italian wave of titling

gore films after animals, à la *Lizard in a Woman's Skin*, *Four Flies on Grey Velvet*, *The Case of the Scorpion's Tale*, *The Black Belly of the Tarantula*, etc. Gilderoy's eyes widen with horror as he scans the footage but we hardly see

a frame of this film within the film; Strickland has us linger on the creation of the sound effects that accompany it. Instead of a witch's hair pulled from the roots, we get radishes plucked from their stems. The sloppy sounds of stabbing a torso are simulated by slicing a cabbage with a kitchen knife, and the smashing of watermelons with mallets impressively conveys the annihilation of flesh.

"I was trying to grapple with associations to do with sound, and how innocent sounds can become corrupted," says Strickland. "That was the whole idea behind *musique concrète* [a French term for music that plays with a mix of organic and synthetic sounds] — taking ordinary sounds and making them extraordinary just through the process of recording them. That

act of pressing a record is a kind of alchemy; it's incredibly magical and I guess I was paying tribute to that period in which these machines were like a medium, a kind of interface between the human being and this other sonic





realm. I found the whole thing fascinating, this kind of no-man's land between high art and exploitation."

Not surprisingly, Strickland's unique approach makes for an atmospheric and hypnotic experience, in part by due to his decision to largely confine his film to a single location: the mixing studio. Yes, it frequently veers off into fantastically dreamlike and expressionistic terrain, but Strickland and director of photography Nick Knowland focussed on their primary location and even chose to operate within a strict set of self-imposed rules.

"The challenge was how to make it fresh each time within such a confined space but not be overt, not draw attention to ourselves," explains Strickland. "Neither of us wanted to have flashy angles or flashy lenses. We wanted a natural look. I think where we wanted the more heightened stuff would be in the details, with the close-ups of the vegetables, the close-ups of the paperwork and the machinery. That's where we felt we could kind of go into these little reveries but use some of the grammar those films used, such as the zoom, which is what Jess Franco did a lot, and [it] has this wonderful, dreamy quality to it. A lot of directors really look down on the zoom as a poor man's short cut to dramatic effect, but I really love it."

While the camera lovingly lingers on archaic 1/4-inch tape machines and solid state effects consoles, *Berberian Sound Studio* (out December 10 on DVD and Blu-ray from IFC Films) plays like a bittersweet ode to a lost era of handmade, analog filmmaking.

"Analog is being superseded I would say quite disruptively, quite forcefully [by digital]," laments Strickland. "It doesn't seem natural. It did seem natural for a while, but...now it seems that everyone's getting bullied into discarding film projection especially. And I think it was just a look at how visual sound-making can be. As great as Pro Tools [editing software] is, I don't wanna watch a film about someone making a soundtrack on Pro Tools. I do wanna watch a film about someone making a soundtrack with all these racks in the background and tape loops going around the room. That to me is visually very pleasing. I remember talking to Peter Howell from the BBC Radiophonic Workshop about the human element involved and the physical performance-based effort in terms of looping tapes, cutting tape with a razor blade and getting up on a stool to reach for something. What I find so bizarre is that all that machinery, it's just on a laptop now. Just one little click."

Eventually, the film-within-a-film collides with Gilderoy's life in mesmerizing and increasingly disorienting ways, giving Strickland an opportunity to veer from conventional narrative structure and plunder a more abstract form, a tactic that has frustrated more than a few viewers.

"I get a rough sense that it's [during] the last third of the film that people start demanding their refunds," he jokes. "The whole thing is very spell-like, that idea of transforming things. And I approached the structure of *Berberian Sound Studio*

in that manner, a little bit like a spell in the same way Kenneth Anger would have made a film. If you approach the film on that level, as something to be experienced, something quite sensory, then you're not so frustrated by not getting the narrative."

With *Berberian Sound Studio*, Strickland joins a small group of European art house directors that includes the likes of Bruno Forzani and Hélène Catet (*Amer*), who look back to the '70s with an experimentalist's eye to reworking the more abstract and sensual qualities of the Italian horror film.

"What I found so wildly inspiring about those films was just the at-

mosphere," says Strickland. "They just had atmosphere in spades and that's what I really get off on in film, otherwise it's a TV movie. And the soundtracks just blew me away: Goblin's *Suspiria*, Riz Ortolani's *Cannibal Holocaust*, if you take that out of context, you just think it's a very gentle romantic theme tune. I love the counterpoint of Italian horror; these were incredibly beautiful, yearning soundtracks that still had those dark elements. They're so rich and so delicate. I think it's the delicacy I love. If you listen to the *Bird With the Crystal Plumage* soundtrack by Morricone, he's using free jazz, dissonance, *musique concrète*, a kind of [Krzysztof] Komeda-type lullaby, [Italian singer] Edda Dell'Orso, and it really works. It doesn't feel stitched together. It feels incredibly cohesive. I just think, 'Wow.'"



**Scream Factory:** (from top) Voice actor Sylvia (Fatma Mohamed) at work, Giovanni (Guido Adorni), Francesco (Cosimo Fusco) and Gilderoy (Toby Jones) at the mixing board, secretary Elena (Tonia Sotiropoulou), and (opposite) Gilderoy makes sound effects.



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The Simpson's-themed costume contest winner, and (left) DJ Tomb Dragomir with girlfriend Emma Davis.



Hellraiser in the house, (left) party host Twitch Couvier, (right, top) RM office manager Ron McKenzie as one of the Nightbreed with Andrea Subissati channelling *American Mary*, and (right, bottom) RM managing editor Monica S. Kuebler gets vampiric with the Devil.



RM editor-in-chief Dave Alexander as a Fulci water zombie, with Kat Von Pire looking on, (left) RM's painted president Rodrigo Gudiño and performer Eric Couke, (right) Ghoulish Gary Pullin with Evil Presley of The Independents, and (far right) the ladies of Sinister Rouge FX pay tribute to *The Conjuring* and *Insidious*.

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## COMMIT YOURSELF

### AMERICAN HORROR STORY: ASYLUM

Starring Zachary Quinto, Joseph Fiennes and Jessica Lange  
Directed by Bradley Buecker, Michael Uppendahl, Alfonso Gomez-Rejon, et al.  
Written by Tim Minear, James Wong, Jennifer Salt, et al.  
FX

After a demented inaugural run, the second season of *American Horror Story* transposes the frenetic lunacy to a more fitting locale: an institution for the criminally insane! Jacking up the sex and violence to more lurid levels than its predecessor, *American Horror Story: Asylum* dramatically switches gears by serving up an entirely new narrative with only a handful of the original cast members returning to play completely different characters.

Set in 1964 Massachusetts (practically the dark ages as far as psychiatry is concerned), it features a returning Jessica Lange as Sister Jude, a repressed nun with a dark past who is the current administrator of Briarcliff Sanatorium.

Among the patients under her care is a suspected serial killer (and possibly the victim of an alien abduction), a female reporter who's been locked up for the in-

curable "disease" of lesbianism and a whole host of psychotics, chronic masturbators and assorted freaks, including Chloë Sevigny playing a nymphomaniac.

Now, in case I didn't have you at Chloë Sevigny playing a nymphomaniac, rest assured there are plenty more perversions at Briarcliff – masked killers, axe murderers, mad doctors, cannibalistic ghouls, extraterrestrials, demonically possessed nuns, necrophiliacs and lots and lots of good old-fashioned, inhumane psychiatric procedures. In true *American Horror Story* style, it's a self-reflexive, spastic meltdown of well-worn horror archetypes. Not that there's anything wrong with that!

From its disturbing opening credit sequence onwards, the series never fails to exploit the expressionistic possibilities of its gothic setting. And as an ensemble piece, it's a jawdropper. Lange delivers what is easily one of the best performances of her career and her portrayal of Sister Jude, from her accent, demeanour and physicality to her slightest intonations is worked out to an incredibly meticulous degree.

Joining her are fellow powerhouse actors James Cromwell (*Six Feet Under*) as a sadistic Nazi war criminal, Zachary Quinto (*Star Trek*) as

a disturbed psychotherapist, and if you hang on until the midway point, you'll witness the spectacular re-

turn of Frances Conroy from season one as the Angel of Death.

Simply put, *American Horror Story: Asylum* is pure, sublime madness that's easily one of the craziest bits of horror television ever concocted.

STUART F. ANDREWS

## SLASHER MOVIE

### MACHETE KILLS

Starring Danny Trejo, Michelle Rodriguez and Amber Heard  
Directed by Robert Rodriguez  
Written by Kyle Ward, Robert Rodriguez and Marcel Rodriguez  
VVS Films

One of the best parts of *Grindhouse* was *Machete*, the trailer for the faux flick starring that tough-as-nails, big blade-wielding anti-hero, played by Danny Trejo. And seeing this Mexican madman treated to a full-length, ultra-violent, wink-and-nudge-filled revenge flick of the same name was more than welcome. However, with the sequel to that film, *Machete Kills*, the joke has worn thin and all that's left is a bloody mess.

Taking a more James Bondian approach, *Machete*'s latest outing has him sent on a mission by





the President of the United States (Charlie Sheen, billed as Carlos Estevez) to take down Mendez, a Mexican terrorist who's threatening to decimate the country with a powerful missile. Equipped with a high-tech arsenal, Machete slices and dices his way through Mexico to Mendez, only to find out that the missile is wired to Mendez's heart and set to a 24-hour timer – and the only person able to disarm it is back in the US. Not much of a twist at first, but the simple action plot becomes convoluted as layer upon layer is packed onto the narrative, including a face-changing assassin hunting down Machete, a group of prostitutes out for revenge and a corporation bent on world destruction.

However, if disembowelment by way of helicopter blades, human bisection by machete, dismemberment aplenty and countless decapitations is what you're after, than look no further. Just too bad the splatter is eclipsed by the talking-head exposition needed to explain everything.

Numerous odd and unlikely celebrities are again cast for the colourful characters that appear, and despite some cringe-worthy choices (Lady Gaga, Alexa Vega), others really nail it (Mel Gibson, Sophia Vergara).

Another faux trailer at the end of the film teases a third *Machete* installment, this time in space. Seeing as he's done so much on Earth, this is a logical extreme. Like *Machete Kills*, this might be worth a watch for the sheer ludicrous factor, but little else.

PATRICK DOLAN

## OF MONSTROUS MEN

### GRIMM: SEASON TWO

Starring David Giuntoli, Russell Hornsby and Silas Weir Mitchell  
Directed by Norberto Barba, Terrence O'Hara, David Solomon, et al.  
Written by Jim Kouf, David Greenwalt, Richard Hatem, et al.  
Universal

Mining literary classics is big business on prime time these days. *Dracula*, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and children's fairy tales are all getting TV makeovers. Among the strongest is *Grimm* (very loosely based on the work of the Brothers Grimm), which debuted in 2011 and has just begun its third season on NBC.

The premise is simple: Wesen (creatures who can pass for human but are not) live among us and the Grimms, historically, are the ones who hunt them. Series lead David Giuntoli plays Nick, a police officer and Grimm, who's flouting the old ways by only going after murderous Wesen, while helping the ones who just want to eke out a peaceful existence. In his way are the Royals, rich and powerful supernaturals who want to harness Nick for their own purposes.

Season two, which amped up the show's serial aspects, primarily concerns the curse that has been placed on Nick's human fiancée Juliette and their desperate attempts to break it (and the disturbing psychological ramifications of doing so). It also



Grimm: A Wesen bares its teeth.

broadens the political scheming of the aforementioned Royals; along the way, more characters are let in on Nick's monster-hunting secret. Despite this turn toward larger story arcs, the show still operates within the police procedural framework, so each episode promises mystery and weird villainous Wesen on top of moving along the overall plot. Season one was a bit rocky, but *Grimm*'s really found its stride here, and the Blu-ray presentation is crisp and colourful.

Fans wishing to delve deeper into what happens behind the scenes, however, may be disappointed. Besides the Blu-ray-exclusive *Grimm* Guide (an encyclopedia of Wesen with short blurbs and clips of the creatures from the show), there's only the *Grimm: Myths, Monsters & Legends* featurette, which offers a surface look at the show's themes, trajectory and mythology. Other extras include the *Bad Hair Day* websiodes featuring secondary characters Monroe (Silas Weir Mitchell) and Rosalie (Bree Turner), deleted scenes, a gag reel, a montage of the season's creature transformations and a Blu-ray-only extended mid-season episode (with some shots missing).

Not a perfect package, but still a treat for those of us who get a thrill out of clever reworkings of the narratives of our youth.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

## IT CAME FROM WITHIN

### BAD MILO!

Starring Ken Marino, Gillian Jacobs and Peter Stormare  
Directed by Jacob Vaughan  
Written by Jacob Vaughan and Benjamin Hayes  
Magnolia

Pardon the pun – it's irresistible – but writer/director Jacob Vaughan isn't just blowing smoke up our asses when he asserts in the *Bad Milo!* press notes that his bum-demon film was influenced by *The Brood*. Similar to how Samantha Egger's Nola Carveth birthed children of rage in that David Cronenberg film, this horror comedy features a character whose stress

manifests itself as a demon that comes out of his backside whenever he (?) is anxious... and kills. And *Bad Milo!* has something else in common with *The Brood*: insight into the anxieties of parenthood.

Ken Marino (TV's *Party Down*) plays Duncan, a mid-level executive who does not cope well with stress, of which he has a lot. His wife Sarah (Gillian Jacobs: TV's *Community*) wants a baby, his crooked boss (Patrick Warburton: *Tea*) forces him to fire several of his co-workers, and he has severe daddy issues, which come out during therapy sessions with Dr. Highsmith (Peter Stormare: *Constantine*). What also comes out during those sessions – out through Duncan's ass, that is – is Milo. The fanged, glistening demon does what Duncan might want to do but cannot: kill those responsible for stressing him out – including, if Milo has his way, Sarah.

The cast's commitment sells the absurdity of the concept, with Marino being most impressive. He makes Duncan not just a figure to laugh at but to maybe cry for as we see how his irresponsible father (Stephen Root: *Office Space*) messed him up as a child, instilling in his son a deep-seated fear of fatherhood.

The Milo monster, meanwhile, is genius. Director Vaughan has eschewed CGI, instead going the practical route to give us a no-budget creature that can be as tender as a puppy or as terrifying as a rabid dog. He is also fun as hell to watch. And Vaughan isn't shy about showing us the carnage those little fangs can inflict.

The director also manages the tone well, giving us big laughs, appropriate gross-out moments and even tenderness at Duncan's plight – because sometimes we could all use a Bad Milo.

SEAN PLUMMER







Betsy Palmer looks back on the *Friday the 13th* franchise in *Crystal Lake Memories*.

## CAMP REUNION

### CRYSTAL LAKE MEMORIES: THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF FRIDAY THE 13TH

Starring Corey Feldman, Sean S. Cunningham, Kane Hodder, et al.  
Written and directed by Daniel Farrands  
1428 Films

Back in the '80s, the *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* sagas ruled the multiplexes. But while the *Elm Street* movies tended to garner mainstream media coverage and positive reviews, the *Friday* flicks received little to no respect.

Though they could never be accused of being high art, the *Friday* films finally did become the subject of two comprehensive books: 2004's *Making Friday the 13th: The Legend of Camp Blood* and 2006's *Crystal Lake Memories: The Complete History of Friday the 13th*, a stunningly illustrated, 300-plus-page tome by Peter M. Bracke, in which the series was given its first true in-depth examination. Now, from the makers of the highly regarded *Never Sleep Again: The Elm Street Legacy* documentary, comes a monumental new doc on the history of Camp Crystal Lake's hockey-masked denizen.

Taking its title and inspiration from Bracke's book, the program is an exhaustive, nearly seven hours-long look at the iconic slasher franchise that to date

includes ten original films, the 2003 crossover *Freddy vs. Jason* and a 2009 reboot, as well as the eponymously named, but unrelated, 1987 to 1990 television series. Narrated by Corey Feldman, who played Jason's gutsy young adversary Tommy Jarvis in 1984's *The Final Chapter*, *Crystal*

*Lake Memories* features close to 150 interviews with the series' surviving cast and crew.

Relating stories are *Friday* creator Sean S. Cunningham, composer Harry Manfredini, makeup guru Tom Savini, actress Betsy Palmer, final girls Adrienne King, Amy Steel and Lar Park Lincoln, and the series'

longest lasting Jason, Kane Hodder. There are also words from rarely interviewed figures such as actress Jennifer Cooke and long-time producer Frank Mancuso, Jr. Absent from the proceedings are stars Kevin Bacon and Crispin Glover, and director Steve Miner.

Also included are some rarely seen behind-the-scene photos and excised footage, which helps illustrate the various battles with the MPAA – whereby the series' filmmakers were often forced to do more slashing than Jason's machete. *Part 3's* original, never-used ending is also discussed, as is actress Melanie Kinnaman's less-than-happy shoot on *The Final Chapter*, and *Jason Lives* director Tom McLoughlin's planned, but unfiled ending involving the masked fiend's father.

The four disc – two Blu-Ray and two DVD – combo pack comes complete with trailers and a commentary with Bracke, Farrands and editor Luke Rafalowski. *Friday* fans – even those who may have read Bracke's book – will definitely want to add this to their collections. It just isn't going to get any more definitive, folks.

JAMES BURRELL

## LET SLEEPING ICONS LIE

### THE LIFE AFTER DEATH PROJECT

Starring Richard Matheson, Whitley Streiber and Dannion Brinkley  
Written and directed by Paul Davids  
Syfy

I hate starting these things off with disclaimers, but sometimes it's inevitable, so here goes. I don't deny the existence of paranormal activity, but neither do I have a compulsion to believe everything I see or hear on the subject. Unfortunately, that latter mindset seems to be the one driving this documentary, not because the evidence is particularly compelling, but rather because of the dead celebrity at its core. The question is, would this rather tepid ghost hunt really matter much if it didn't involve a beloved genre icon? Personally, I'm leaning toward "no."

Of course, "beloved" is a bit of an understatement when it comes to the late Forrest J Ackerman. The horror and sci-fi journalist, publisher and archivist was a kind and generous soul who launched many careers and made thousands of monster kids' dreams come true, so wouldn't it be cool if he started trying to contact various folks from beyond the grave? And wouldn't there be a super-sized side order of

irony given that Ackerman was also a lifelong atheist?

That's the bill of goods we're being sold here, but the encounters in question consist of a mysterious inkblot (seriously) and a few other coincidences and bumps in the night that would otherwise barely register on even the most diehard paranormal enthusiast's radar. The two-disc set is fleshed out with sundry Ackerman footage and trivia, all of which is entertaining but largely old hat to hardcore fans, plus a bunch of mainly unrelated ghost stories.

I'm really astonished at the amount of critical acclaim this film has garnered so far; it probably won't be negatively impacted by one bad review. Still, I think maybe if the Ackerman really did decide to contact any of these people from whatever afterlife may be, he might just politely suggest that they get a life and leave it at that.

JOHN W. BOWEN

## COLD COMFORT

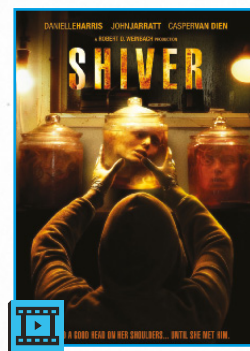
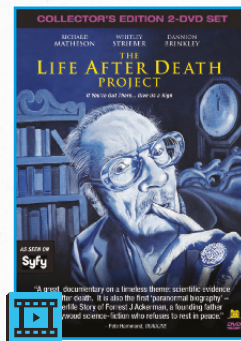
### SHIVER

Starring Danielle Harris, John Jarratt and Casper Van Dien  
Directed by Julian Richards  
Written by Robert D. Weinbach  
Image

Tenacity, thy name is slasher... A psycho (John Jarratt: *Wolf Creek*) kills the young women who constantly reject his advances. He's neither exceptionally strong nor clever, yet somehow manages to elude the police for decades. That is, until one of his victims (Danielle Harris: *Halloween 4* and *5*) escapes and he becomes obsessed with finishing the job.

There is a shade of promise in this idea, but the actual cat-and-mouse game that ensues is too undercooked psychologically and too cheesy and credulity-straining plotwise. The police in *Shiver* are so phenomenally incompetent that at least three officers are killed by the psycho at close range while the dumb detective (Casper Van Dien: *Starship Troopers*) is given little to do other than pop up occasionally to tell Danielle's character: "I'm sorry you were almost killed... again."

The main culprit here is the lacklustre screenplay – by the writer/producer of the freakshow-creepshow classic *The Mutations* (a.k.a. *Freakmaker*, 1974) – whose *deja vu* elements are culled from hundreds of similar B-movies. These are occasionally elevated by Harris' fine performance or an effective kill (highlight: the bloody garroting of a young woman on the floor), but if a horror film is only as effective as its "monster," than this one hardly registers: our maniac, incompetent with, and resentful





of, women is too old and pathetic to be truly threatening. Jar-rat's overacting only creates an unintentional caricature.

Director Julian Richards (*The Last Horror Movie*, *Darklands*) has his hands tied with a script that does not delve deep enough into the potential link between killer and would-be victim (something that, say, Dario Argento would milk for all its worth). His low budget is betrayed by a less-than-convincing day-for-night car chase and some unnecessary CGI blood. The end result is a competent if formulaic horror whose B-thrills and somewhat forced twists and turns may provide some mild fun to those who are not too picky about their viewing material.

DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

## DAN OF THE CLOTH

### ZOMBIE HUNTER

Starring Martin Copping, Clare Niederpruem and Danny Trejo  
Directed by Kevin King  
Written by Kevin King and Kurt Knight  
Well Go USA Entertainment

Although not quite on the same level as flicks from *The Asylum* or *Syfy*, this horror-actioner's cookie-cutter characters, over-stylized editing, video game-like acting and obvious CGI still make for an idiotic experience. But goddamn, it's a helluva of a lot of fun.

After being introduced to zombie-making street drug Natas, we are whisked one year into the future, after the world has been overrun by the undead. There we meet our

troubled, leather-clad, raspy-voiced hero, known only as Hunter (Martin Copping). His badass 'tude feels forced, but he quickly proves himself by decimating a few roamers in his bitchin' Camaro.

After a bit of unneeded voice-over and a lot of killing, Hunter runs into a small group of survivors, made up of sexy "Fast Lane" Debbie, good gal Alison, nerdy teen Ricky, middle-aged mechanic Jerry, sleazy

fatso Lyle and, of course, Father Jesús (Danny Trejo in far too small a role), who welcome him into their shanty stronghold after mistaking him for an "eater" and shooting him.

During Hunter's stay, both ladies take a liking to him and immediately try to woo him in their own ways. Luckily this soap opera wraps up quickly when a horde of zombies and a large mutant monster attack the survivors, forcing them to flee and fight their way to a fabled airfield located on the other side of a mutant-inhabited town.

Geysers of red CGI, quick cuts, flame wipe transitions, pink-tinted sequences, speeding cars, gobs of gore, a crazy clown with a chainsaw and two scenes of Trejo mowing down flesheaters with only an axe fill the majority of this film's running time, allowing for only minimal exposition between the bloody action sequences. Clearly, with all the movie's flair, Kevin King, in his directorial debut, is trying hard to make this zombie romp slick and ultra-cool, and in doing so manages to give the narrative momentum without making too much of a hot pink mess.

You may lose brain cells, but *Zombie Hunter* is packed with so much slaughter and mayhem, you just can't look away.

PATRICK DOLAN



## OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE COMMITS ZOMBICIDE

ZZZZZZZZOMBIES...

### ZOMBIE UNDEAD

MVD Visual

Zombies have been riding an undying wave of popularity for some time now; in fact, the pile of unwatched zombie videos on my desk keeps threatening to swarm my entire office. So, this month I've opted to clear some space and appease the rotter gods with three MVD titles. First up is this British offering about a group of people trapped in a hospital after a terrorist bomb has turned most of the population into shambling skinjobs. Set almost entirely in the clinic's cramped corridors, it had the potential to capitalize on the survivors' sense of suffocating fear, as the undead shuffled around looking to munch on them, but instead, it's just kind of boring. And the worst thing you could be in any film, especially a zombie film, is boring!



BODY COUNT: 30

BEST ZOMBIE DEATH: Corkscrew to the face

NUDE, RUDE AND CHEWED

### ZOMBIE A-HOLE

MVD Visual

As far from boring as you can get, this film has more naked girls, gory deaths and gut-munching zombie skeleton creatures than you can shake a shotgun at. And that's all before the opening credits! *Zombie A-Hole* follows a mysterious bounty hunter who wears a duster and speaks with a slow Southern drawl and a foul-mouthed girl with an eye patch and a mechanical hand. They're hunting a zombie demon that kills girls and their twin sisters. Interspersed with cool animated cut scenes, this one features naked women who run through fields, read books, talk on the phone and bathe before getting killed in goofy, gruesome ways. Director Dustin Mills (*Puppet Master Massacre*) has matured as a filmmaker (no, for real!) and I can't wait to see his next offering.



BODY COUNT: 48

BEST ZOMBIE DEATH: Laser blaster blow-out

TASTER'S CHOICE

### BATH SALT ZOMBIES

MVD Visual

Speak of the Devil! Director Dustin Mills returns to capitalize on the controversy surrounding synthetic drug MDPV, more commonly known as "bath salts," which was swirling through the news last year when it caused a series of psychotic "zombie" attacks by people who overdosed on it. Beginning with a '50s-style animated educational film about the dangers of drugs, it then follows a junkie named Richie who gets hooked on bath salts by a couple of scumbag dope pushers. Pretty soon Richie is ripping off heads, tearing out guts and eating



people's faces, all to a stomping punk rock soundtrack! Though it suffers from some cheesy CGI, Mills pulls it off with loads of witty dialogue, wicked gore and a winning message: only dead dopes do dope!

BODY COUNT: 50 + 1 dog

BEST ZOMBIE DEATH: Decapitated by a subway train

LAST CHANCE LANCE



TAKE A TRIP TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POND WITH TWO NEW SPINE-RATTLING MINISERIES, COURTESY THE BBC



## IN THE FLESH

Starring Luke Newberry, Emily Bevan and Ricky Tomlinson  
Directed by Jonny Campbell  
Written by Dominic Mitchell

Considering the enormous success of AMC's *The Walking Dead*, it's no surprise the BBC wanted to bite off a piece for themselves. Their answer to the undead epidemic is a three-episode miniseries set in dreary, rain-drenched Lancashire that offers a desperately needed, intelligent perspective on the zombie apocalypse.

As usual with such uprisings, the recently departed have clawed out of their graves to get on with the business of chomping flesh, eating brains and generally ruining everyone's day. But this time, there's a cure! With the proper medications, zombies can be restored more or less to the same people they were prior to death – except for the small matter of being technically deceased. Partial Death Syndrome is what they call it (PDS for short).

So with the help of outreach workers, flesh-coloured makeup and lifelike contact lenses, zombie are assimilated back into their respective communities. This is where our protagonist enters the picture and the trouble begins.

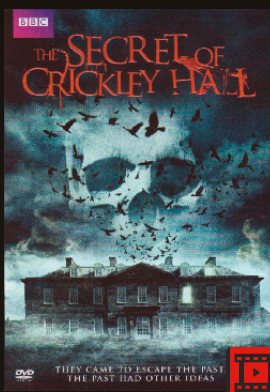
Brilliant newcomer Luke Newberry (*Frankenstein's Army*) plays Kieren, a young PDS sufferer struggling to adjust to his new existence after having committed suicide shortly before the rising kicked off. Not only must he deal with his shell-shocked parents and the guilt of having munched on his share of body parts, but also the bigotry that runs rampant in his village. Not everyone is thrilled with the return of these PDS patients, especially those who remember them during their "rabid" phase.

Writer Dominic Mitchell cleverly riffs on metaphors suggested by Romero's *Dead* cycle, specifically the notion of zombies as a repressed underclass (an idea abandoned by many films that have jumped on the bandwagon since). As persecuted members of their communities, these wretched creatures serve to skewer a host of social ills from racial prejudice and homophobia to the rampant xenophobia that infected British society in the wake of the 2011 riots.

Some jarring shifts between heart-wrenching drama and borderline splatstick left this reviewer a little disoriented and struggling to swallow the premise at times. However, the end of episode one packs such a hardcore, devastating wallop that it's impossible not to get sucked in for the rest of the ride.

Due to a generally positive reception, the BBC has commissioned a second season for 2014, so it won't be long before the dead rise again in Lancashire. In the meantime, if you're still jonesing for a fix of Northern English zombies, there's always *Coronation Street*.

STUART F. ANDREWS



## THE SECRET OF CRICKLEY HALL

Starring Suranne Jones, Tom Ellis and Douglas Henshall  
Directed by Joe Aherne  
Written by James Herbert

Most people in haunted house stories don't show up at their gothic pile of choice having brought the ghosts with them. The Cayleigh family, however, is an exception: having suffered the disappearance of five-year-old Cam from a London playground the previous year, they decide to get out of the city for the anniversary of the tragedy, and wind up staying in the Northern English countryside, at Crickley Hall.

Mother Eva (Suranne Jones) is convinced that Cam is only missing, not dead – a conviction that's compounded when she hears his disembodied voice assuring her of the fact via an abandoned spinning top left over from Crickley Hall's days as an orphanage for evacuated children during World War II. But Cam's isn't the only ghostly voice in the house...

The three-episode miniseries format allows writer/director Joe Aherne to create not only a slow-burning intensity – via a narrative that flips between the present day and 1943, the year in which eleven of the Hall's orphans mysteriously drowned in a flood – but also to fully explore the psychological journey of his principal characters. It's here that we see the true strength of this adaptation: its cast. Jones portrays a woman possessed of an increasingly fissured psyche with delicacy and nuance. Tom Ellis captures the emotional conflict suffered by her husband perfectly, torn between his wish to support Eva, his desire to protect his remaining children, and his need to grieve for the child that Eva doesn't believe is dead. And Douglas Henshall is chilling as sadistic orphanage owner Augustus Cribben, turning in a performance as sharp and cold as a sliver of ice. Brooding, intense and frightening, this is a top-notch ghost story to be savoured during the cold winter nights.

CLAIRE HORSNELL



## REISSUES



## THE EYES HAVE IT

EYES WITHOUT A FACE (1960) Blu-ray

Starring Pierre Brasseur, Edith Scob and Alida Valli  
 Directed by Georges Franju  
 Written by Pierre Boileau, Thomas Narcejac, Jean Redon  
 and Claude Sautet  
 Criterion

Though mad surgeons appeared in scary movies before *Eyes Without a Face's* Dr. Génessier, few films captured the true poetic terror of the archetype as potently as this essential masterpiece of Eurohorror. Released at the beginning of the French new wave movement, Georges Franju's debut feature, which has now received a Blu-ray upgrade from Criterion, is a staggeringly influential work that invigorates common Hollywood monster movie tropes with the sensibilities of surrealist cinema.

Seemingly fraught over the disappearance of his daughter Christiane (Edith Scob), Génessier (Pierre Brasseur) is called in by police to identify a young woman who's been fished out of the river — her eyes are there, but not the face itself. Although Génessier identifies the body as his kin, Christiane is actually hidden away in her father's operating room with a severely burned face. Génessier orders his nurse Louise (Alida Valli) to find young girls and lure

them back to the medical lab so that he can transplant the skin from their faces onto Christiane's scarred visage, hoping to eventually perfect the technique.

North American audiences who saw the film as *The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus* probably weren't prepared for the way *Eyes Without a Face* deliberately undercuts exquisite beauty with distasteful vulgarities, producing a profoundly disturbing effect. Centred on a skillfully rendered surgical sequence in which the skin of a woman's face is slowly and methodically cut through by scalpel and removed, the film revels in a slow, lyrical grotesqueness that few had attempted at that point, never mind mastered. Drawing from fantastic films such as Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* and Franju's own short slaughterhouse doc *Le sang des bêtes* (included on Criterion's release), *Eyes Without a Face* is a distinctly contemporary work.

This sensibility manifests in a few ways — from the unsettling, immobile skin-like masks Christiane wears between operations, to the incredible time-lapse sequence of her transplanted skin disintegrating from what remains of her face. Despite this horrific content, there's a romantically tragic undertone to the story — yes, Génessier kills those unwilling skin donors, but



he commits these atrocities out of love for his daughter, not malice. It's this sensitivity that helps *Eyes Without a Face* inhabit a place where some of the most memorable and affecting horrors of the last century live: in that coveted sweet spot between art house and grindhouse.

PAUL CORUPE

## HE KEEPS COMING HOME

JOHN CARPENTER'S HALLOWEEN 35TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION (1978) Blu-ray

Starring Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Pleasence and P. J. Soles  
 Directed by John Carpenter  
 Written by John Carpenter and Debra Hill  
 Anchor Bay

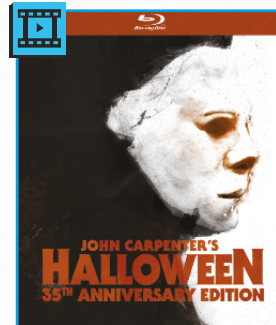
Gushing over a classic is one thing, but doing so for three and a half decades without a break is quite another, so you'll have to forgive me. Yes, that's the kind of fan I am when it comes to John Carpenter's *Halloween*, and it turns out that this new home video release is made for folks like me. Even if you were a punk kid when the film was released, you knew it was important — there was a purity to it — and of course soon enough its visual aesthetic and commercial breakthroughs led to countless successors.

Certainly *Halloween* has already been thoroughly celebrated — indeed, Stefan Hutchinson, who made the doc *Halloween: 25 Years of Terror*, contributes a solid essay to this generous Blu-ray. So what's really left to give fans at this point? Photo galleries of Michael Myers tattoos?

Well, what distinguishes this release from the previous ones is the freshness and polish of its materials. Both director/co-writer Carpenter and star Jamie Lee Curtis have provided commentary in the past, but here they do so in tandem, and the result is quite magical — arguably worth the price of the disc alone. Curtis' memory is astounding, and she fills in details that not only elude Carpenter but, frankly, would elude most of us; moreover, it's their mutual respect as well as affection for what they achieved in *Halloween* that makes one not only proud to be a fan of the film, but a fan of the genre overall. Sure, Jamie Lee has long since moved on, and is better known these days for pitching yogurt and writing kids books, but that makes her full-on return to the roots of her stardom only that much more special.

"I have not paid attention to the horror film fan base for a long time," she confesses in *The Night She Came Home* featurette. "I have not really honoured it." That said, she certainly makes up for this over the course of her appearance at 2012's HorrorHound Weekend, the topic of this new and well-produced (if a tad long) featurette.

Oh, and did I mention how tremendous the transfer is? The result is that you'll feel like you're watching a pristine 35mm print, but not one that's been so digi-







Psycho III

tally scrubbed that it looks born-on-disc. Just one more way that old meets new here, each enriching the other.

PETER GUTIERREZ

## BACK TO THE BATES MOTEL

### PSYCHO II (1983) Blu-ray

Starring Anthony Perkins, Vera Miles and Meg Tilly  
Directed by Richard Franklin  
Written by Tom Holland

### PSYCHO III (1986) Blu-ray

Starring Anthony Perkins, Diana Scarwid and Jeff Fahey  
Directed by Anthony Perkins  
Written by Charles Edward Pogue  
Scream Factory

In 1983, the impossible happened. Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) was released from a mental institution. That's not the impossible part, though. The real shocker is that *Psycho II* is a stylish, worthy sequel to the Alfred Hitchcock classic. The film follows Norman as he tries to reclaim his life and avoid harassment from the sister of one of his victims, Lila Loomis (Vera Miles, also reprising her role from the original). In the meantime, "Mother" has started calling Norman again... but that's just Loomis trying to mess with him, right?

Also premiering on Blu-ray from Scream Factory is the entertaining but tonally confused *Psycho III*, which sees Norman back in drag and

murdering motel transients. His renewed bloodlust is kept at bay by a troubled ex-nun (Diana Scarwid) he's fallen in love with, but Norman can't keep Mother a

secret for long. These two underrated '80s sequels are given the Collector's Edition Blu-ray treatment, and while these discs aren't as lavish as the company's releases of *Halloween II* and *III*, they do boast excellent new transfers.

For special features, there are the usual trailers and interviews, which range from informative (Jeff Fahey discussing *Psycho III*), to charming (archival interviews with Perkins and others from *Psycho II*), to pointless (no one cares about Diana Scarwid's nude body double). The real highlight here is the commentaries. For *Psycho II*, screenwriter Tom Holland (*Fright Night*) addresses the challenge of creating a worthwhile sequel to *Psycho* that could stand on its own merits. He also discusses the *Psycho II* that could've been since Perkins was on the fence about reprising his most famous role. (It was very nearly turned into a made-for-TV movie with Christopher Walken playing Bates.) Holland speaks highly of Perkins, who was eager to show the sympathetic side of the tormented killer.

If the bloodshed in *Psycho II* had more to do with studio executives than artistic vision, that compromise was even greater in *Psycho III*. Studio demands quashed screenwriter Charles Edward Pogue's more imaginative ideas, and on the commentary, he discusses his intention to have Jeff Fahey's quirky Bates Motel clerk as the real killer (leaving Norman an innocent) and his aborted plans for an unmade *Psycho IV*. (*Psycho* screenwriter Joseph Stefano would later pen a made-for-TV movie under that title).

If you like your horror with pathos or are curious about what happened to Norman Bates after he got locked up, these sequels are worth a look, and Scream Factory's impressive Blu-rays are the best option for these films, which revisited the famous cinematic killer long before A&E's *Bates Motel* made it fashionable.

ADAM CLARKE

## MANDATORY EUROSLEAZE

### HOW TO SEDUCE A VIRGIN (1974) DVD

Starring Alice Arno, Robert Woods and Tania Bussellier  
Directed by Jess Franco  
Written by Jess Franco and Alain Petit  
Mondo Macabro

Considered by Franco connoisseurs as a companion piece to the human hunting tale *Countess Perverse*, *How to Seduce a Virgin* (a.k.a. *Plaisir à trois*)

is one of eleven films that Jess Franco directed (under *nom de guerre* Clifford Brown) in 1974.

Using the same cast as *Countess*, this slick, luridly coloured film has a heavy emphasis on softcore smut, yet the story does feature a cruelly ironic finale. With its horror implied through evil scheming, manipulation and humiliation, former porn actress Alice Arno plays Martine Bressac, an imbalanced libertine freshly released from the booby hatch after Bobbitzing a lover.

Back home with her loudly clothed husband Charles (in one scene, Robert Woods is decked out in a purple leisure suit and yellow dress shirt – yow!), Martine trolls the beach in search of a new waif deserving of a place in her "museum" – a basement filled with the preserved cadavers of victims frozen in moments of sheer erotic terror!

The touchy-feely couple soon plot to lure the 21-year-old daughter of a diplomat, Cecile (model/porn star Tania Bussellier), into a routine of debauchery before she too is preserved as one of Martine's *objects d'art erotique*.

Assuredly directed and sporting elaborate masturbation montages steeped in Sadean voyeuristic pleasures (not to mention beaver fur that would make Tinto Brass explode with delight), *Seduce* is also grounded by an unusually literate script, clean plotting and a trippy lounge score that perfectly matches the marble mirror panels and pastel shades that decorate the couple's amazing country mansion.

Mondo Macabro's DVD sports a lovely transfer of a near-pristine print source, plus informative interviews with critic/Franco biographer Stephen Thrower and co-screenwriter Alain Petit. A great release that's mandatory for Franco and Euroslaze fans.

MARK R. HASAN

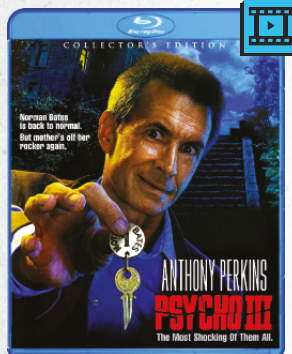
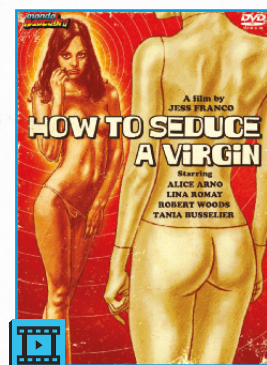
## A BLAZE OF GLORY

### NIGHT OF THE COMET (1984) Blu-ray

Starring Catherine Mary Stewart, Kelli Maroney and Mary Woronov  
Written and Directed by Thom Eberhardt  
Scream Factory

If there's one thing that B-horror is missing these days, it's a sense of fun. Sure, flicks like *Hobo with a Shotgun* may be able to produce a certain maniacal anarchy with over-the-top violence and blacker-than-night gallows humour, but the comedy found on display in most genre films today feels like something to be endured, rather than enjoyed. Perhaps filmmakers will take a few lessons from 1984's *Night of the Comet* (back from the brink of extinction on glorious Blu-ray), for no other horror or sci-fi film of the past 30 years has been able to capture so expertly a sense of carefree exuberance.

To give away too much of the plot would be a disservice to the uninitiated. At the risk of sounding dismissive, not much actually happens in the film.





Instead, the setup – most life on Earth is annihilated by a deadly comet passing through the planet's atmosphere – is an excuse for a series of set pieces featuring two valley girls (Catherine Mary Stewart and Kelli Maroney) and their attempts to adjust to their new post-apocalyptic life while staying one step ahead of the homicidal lunatics created via indirect exposure to the comet.



Though writer/director Thom Eberhardt could have made the film a nasty satire by depicting the pair as shallow and vapid, he instead pres-

ents us with a gleeful horror romp by making them intelligent and likeable. Rather than panic in the face of danger, the girls calmly assess their situation, stock up on firearms, and then hit the mall. Coupled with Eberhardt's characterization, Stewart's portrayal is especially effective, giving the audience a heroine who's strong and sexy without being officious – a task which subsequent generations of filmmakers and actresses have failed at spectacularly.

Though *Comet* languished for years as a bare-bones DVD, Scream Factory makes up for lost time with a plethora of extras. In addition to the requisite stills gallery and trailer, there are feature-length commentaries from Eberhardt, Stewart, Maroney and production designer John Muto; and interviews with special effects artist David B. Miller and Robert Beltran, who turns up at the midpoint as an amiable trucker. Perhaps the only disappointment is that Scream Factory saw fit to jump on the '70s revival bandwagon with some well-drawn but inappropriate cover art; this is an '80s flick through and through, and the earth-toned, girls-with-guns sleeve really ought to have been, like, totally new wave.

PRESTON FASSEL

## BUZZED

### THE FLY (1958) Blu-ray

Starring David (Al) Hedison, Patricia Owens and Vincent Price

Directed by Kurt Neumann

Written by James Clavell

Fox

It's certainly been a long time coming, but now you can hellllp yourself to a 1080p transfer of Fox's



The Fly

1958 *The Fly*. You know the story: scientist Andre Delambre (David Hedison) discovers teleportation, uses self as guinea pig and gets scrambled with a housefly. Typical mutant chaos ensues.

Told mainly in flashback, James Clavell's adaptation of the George Langelaan story is a slow build – we don't even meet Hedison for nearly a half-hour. Despite knowing the outcome, the plot still generates suspense by withholding as much information as possible. We're forced to ask questions right along with clueless Vincent Price, like, just why is Helene Delambre (Patricia Owens) so obsessed with finding that fly with the white head?

The movie is a classic because there's depth beyond the melodrama. Its themes can be read several ways: as a *Frankenstein* parable, a tragic love story (two brothers in love with the same woman), but it's best viewed with the monster standing in for unbridled sexual energy. Andre makes for a pretty lacklustre romantic lead, more committed to science than his fetching wife Helene. This hasn't gone unnoticed by brother-in-law Francois (Vincent Price). It's only when Andre goes buggy and he struggles to keep his monstrous urges down that the movie gets a lift.

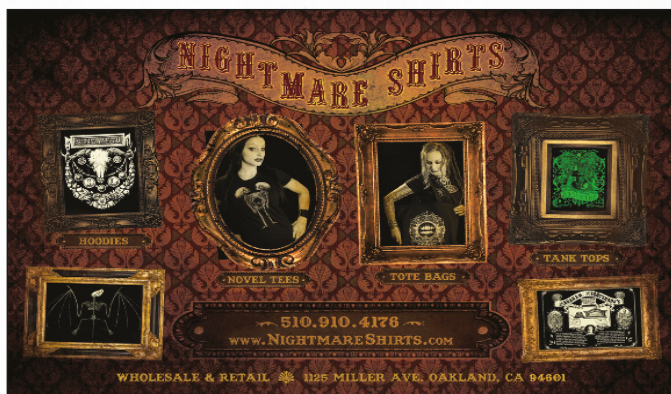
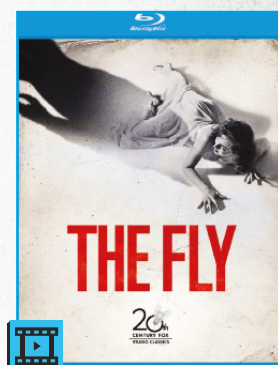
Vincent gives good Price in one of his first genre roles, Patricia Owens gives great scream, but Hedi-

son only shines when he's performing silently under a sheet. He plays up the jittery insect physicality, particularly after Owens unmasks him; her revulsion at her hairy, compound-eyed spouse sends Hedison's fly into a groping frenzy that's enjoyably unsubtle.

The science of swapping fly appendages for human ones is admittedly ridiculous – a problem corrected by the Cronenberg remake – but at least the flick looks great, particularly the laboratory brimming with wall-to-wall gadgetry, a prosthetic fly head that stands the test of time and a gruesome opening that seems torn from a Hammer film.

The disc itself boasts a colourful upgrade into high-def, and there are plenty of extra goodies (a biography on Vincent Price and commentary track featuring Hedison among them) that will give you the appropriate, er, buzz.

JEFF SZPIRGLAS





# THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILE:

*The Nature of the Man Beast*

by Paul Corupe

**V**iewed from the relatively safe and sane world of Hollywood films, Jerry Warren and other so-bad-they're-good filmmakers aren't just figures of derision, but also provocateurs of sorts. While Warren didn't infuse his work with enough personality to earn the kind of attention now bestowed upon trash icons such as Ed Wood or Andy Milligan, this pioneering schlock director took us everywhere from *The Incredible Petrified World* to *Frankenstein Island* and gave John Carradine more opportunities to work than Freddy Krueger in a coma ward. More importantly, his films – including his debut, *Man Beast* (1956) – still retain that transgressive unpredictability that makes mind-bogglingly shoddy drive-in horror such an appealing alternative to familiar studio fare.

Nobody will ever confuse *Man Beast* with a good film, but it's a far less cynical work than Warren's later slapdash efforts *Invasion of the Animal People* (1959) and *Face of the Screaming Werewolf* (1964). Warren was notorious for recutting Mexican and European horror flicks, adding additional footage (usually starring Carradine) and then releasing it on an unsuspecting public. While *Man Beast* devotes a significant chunk of running time to stock footage of mountain climbers scaling a snowy peak, it's fairly seamless and even coherently assembled – at least when compared to *Curse of the Stone Hand* (1964) and *The Wild World of Batwoman* (1966), the other titles that join *Man Beast* on the first volume of VCI's new Jerry Warren Collection DVD series.

Seemingly based on headline-generating Texas oil tycoon Tom Slick, who led several yeti expeditions to the Himalayas in the mid-1950s, the film revolves around Connie (Asa Maynor) and her search for her brother, who's gone missing while travelling with yeti researcher Dr. Erickson (George Wells Lewis). Along with her love triangle-ready companions Steve (Tom Maruzzi) and Trevor (Lloyd Nelson), Connie reaches the Himalayas



where she joins up with Erickson and his Tibetan guide Varga (George Skaff), who are closing in on the cryptid's mountain domain.

The appeal of "bad" films has been the subject of some debate in recent years, but whether you're talking about inept classics such as *Robot Monster* or *Glen or Glenda?*, or modern efforts such as *Birdemic* or *Troll 2*, it's apparent that a poorly made film has the power to shock, confuse, delight and frustrate in ways that more polished product simply doesn't dare. There's an unexpected thrill in seeing movies suddenly splinter off from accepted filmmaking conventions, whether it's Bela Lugosi yelling nonsense over stock footage of buffalos, a kid peeing on a dinner table full of food or, in the case of *Man Beast*, the wildly disorienting five-minute sequence in which the explorers finally face the yeti.

Once inside the cryptid's cave – actually a darkened, completely bare set with a black background – the scene collapses into unintentional surrealism as it systematically destroys all spatial relationships, continuity and common sense. With no dialogue – only weird, echo-laden spookshow music – Warren isolates all five characters in a series of single medium shots, each staring off at

different angles into the black void that surrounds them, creating a disorienting effect. The hypnotically edited footage rolls on until a yeti appears. Single shots continue – Trevor screams, Varga smiles, Erickson waves a flare, Connie recoils in terror and Steve looks completely lost in the dark ether. Finally, Varga smacks Trevor with a club. He falls and the yeti runs by his POV three times in the same direction (to indicate multiple monsters?). Without warning, Trevor then falls off a previously unseen cliff and dies, leaving everyone – viewers included – scratching their heads.

Watching this scene is equally puzzling and startling. Although the effect was surely unintentional – perhaps the result of a tiny studio space – it conjures an uneasy mix of emotions. If viewers laugh at the strangely assembled scene, it's less about feeling superior to Warren's ineptitude than in recognizing the film has generated a response in us that we didn't expect – not unlike when we laugh after being successfully caught by a film's jump scare.

And really, even if the effect is accidental, aren't emotional reactions what films are meant to produce? Films that stick to the rules can be boring, but movies such as *Man Beast* that don't even seem to know those rules in the first place can engender emotions more exhilarating than the view from atop a yeti's mountainous domain. 🐾







# CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

## Man Bites Apple by John W. Bowen

That time of year again, eh? Pick up Krampus outfit from dry cleaners, decorate long-dead Christmas tree with silver head-drilling spheres, gift wrap multiple lumps of coal for family and friends, and ponder, weak and weary, over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore (i.e., this year's Bowen's Basement columns). I really couldn't blame you for thinking I've narrowed my field to rubber-suit monsters and nature-run-amok, lightly seasoned with true crime and the occasional yeti nipple. I'd be lying if I said these weren't a few of my favourite things, and yet I'm going to finish out 2013 with something completely different, not to mention (gasp!) current. You just gotta see it, that's all.

There's this serial killer, and he's got a camera crew following him, chronicling his atrocities as well as the more mundane details of his day-to-day existence. It's called *Man Bites Dog*, right? No? *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon*, maybe? No? It's actually called *Charm*, and as baldly derivative of the aforementioned films (and a few others) as it is, it actually surpasses them in a few respects, if admittedly not all.

Meet Malcolm (Ashley Cahill, the overachiever who also wrote, directed and produced), a late-twentysomething expat Brit who has lived in New York City since his teens and hence claims to be "as New York as Gershwin." Hiding in plain sight and making only token efforts to cover his tracks, Malcolm is racking up a body count so quickly – especially during the first reel – that we can barely keep track of the numbers. We know from the get-go that he's driven purely by a desire to kill, and yet the bogus *raison d'être* he has carefully constructed – basically, that he's saving New York from itself – is so mordantly funny that it lightens up a



lot of otherwise very unfunny moments.

The Disneyfication of New York, and particularly Times Square, under the Giuliani and Bloomberg administrations has long been a sore spot for certain locals (and a significant number of tourists as well) who may be enjoying the newfound safety but still feel it's all gone a bit too far. They don't miss the muggers, but they miss the grindhouses; the air smells better, and yet they find themselves pining for a bit of authentic skank. Malcolm, of course, wants to restore a bit of disorder, but it doesn't end there; he's convinced himself that if he singlehandedly drives the crime rate up, property values will eventually sag low enough to finally make the rotten apple affordable again for artists, sundry bohemian types and maybe even the cast of *Friends*.



**CHARM**

NEW YORK CITY HAS BECOME CLEAN, SAFE AND PROSPEROUS... CLEARLY SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE.



Malcolm's preferred murderus operandi is the gun, but *Charm* also features no shortage of stab-bings, stranglings, bludgeonings and even the odd bathtub drowning. ("Was that the first time you ever drowned somebody?" the director asks. "No," says Malcolm, "I drowned this really annoying black surfer guy in Brighton. Believe it or not, black

surfers do exist. Felt kind of bad though, 'cause they're such a rarity, you know, like Jewish handy-men or funny Germans.")

Recalling *American Psycho's* Patrick Bateman, Malcolm isn't the least bit likeable and his smugness is every bit as repellent as his homicidal tendencies, and yet he's riveting. Whether he's literally tearing someone a new asshole or bickering Tarantino-style with his director ("Literature and Sam Fuller movies are two giant, gaping holes in your education, Robert."), he's the stuff of cult classic anti-hero greatness. *Charm* makes no pretensions about originality, preferring to wear its influences proudly on its sleeve, and yet there's no disputing the qualities that set it soundly apart from those films. The budget was obviously low, but direction, editing and all aspects of production design are surprisingly slick, and the performances from principals and underlings alike are truly impressive, including a brief and darkly hilarious Kirsten Dunst cameo. New York indie filmmakers Lloyd Kaufman, Frank Henenlotter and Bill Lustig have all bent my ear to the point of snapping it off over their displeasure with the sanitizing of their beloved downtown, so I hope they're reading this, because they owe themselves this viewing experience.

Now get the hell out of my basement and keep Krampus in Christmas. Have a holiday, and I'll see you next year. 🍷



# BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

**T**he end of the year may be swarming with holiday activities, but it's also a time filled with preparation for the upcoming awards season. While comic book awards don't get as much exposure as their music or movie counterparts, they're crucial in getting the word out on a variety of titles in an industry that continues to be dominated by Marvel and DC.

While there are a large number of high-profile industry awards around the world, such as the Eisners, the Eagles and the Tezukas, when it comes to celebrating accomplishments exclusively in horror comics, there's precious few available. It was a situation that writer and horror fan Decapitated Dan wanted to rectify, which eventually led to the creation of the Ghostly Awards in 2011.

Dan was writing for comicmonsters.com at the time, a site that held its own fan-based yearly awards. It was while working there that he got the idea for the Ghostlys (ghostlyawards.com).

"I started to wonder how horror comic creators could get more recognition other than just through fan-based awards," explains Dan. "I mean, don't get me wrong: the fans drive the industry, but how come the Emmys, Oscars and Eisners stand above the rest in terms of respect? It's because they are industry-based. So I reached out to some people who were doing what I was doing – not people working on comics, but people covering horror comics new and old – to join me and help launch this concept."

Dan rounded up industry experts including Steve Banes (of thehorrorsofitall.blogspot.ca), Mike Howlett (author of *The Weird World of Eerie Publications*), Lonnie Nadler (bloody-disgusting.com) and Mykal Banta (of bloodypulp-tales.com). With their assistance, he launched the Ghostly Awards, named for acclaimed comic creator "Ghostly" Graham Ingles, who was also, appropriately, the awards' first Hall of Fame inductee.

Books are submitted to the judges throughout the calendar year; they read the entries and decide on nominees. In January, all comic book creators and industry professionals are allowed to vote on the predetermined short list.



"Fans [can] vote as well, but they only control the winner for the Best New Comic Category," Dan notes. "All of the other winners are decided through a magically evil mathematical system that only myself and the other judges know about."

Since its formation, the Ghostlys has added several more high-profile adjudicators, but the mandate has remained the same: to recognize outstanding achievements in horror comics – a subgenre that has carved itself an impressive niche market.

"Superhero comics make up about 85% of the American comic market," says Dan. "That final 15% is broken into even smaller chunks...but horror makes up the largest chunk in that group. So the books are there; it's not like we're talking about only ten comics each year. As a matter of fact, in 2012 we kept track of every horror title that came out through Diamond Distributors and it was well over 350. Now add to that number the number of self-published comics that are submitted, and you are looking at over 400 titles in 2012. So honestly, why shouldn't there be an award to showcase the best of the best in horror?"

Dan's insight speaks to the overall rise of hor-

ror comics during last few years. Dark Horse has significantly ramped up its genre offerings, including several titles set in Mignola's Hellverse. Spurred by the tremendous success of *The Walking Dead*, Image has become home to a number of critically acclaimed, creator-owned titles such as *Saga*. Zenescope continues its popular *Wonderland* series, and relative newcomers such as Boom! and Dynamite are filling the racks with many pulp-inspired, monster-filled goodies. But what has led to this tremendous growth in the industry?

"I attribute it to the rise of horror across all forms of media," says Dan. "When you look back on the late '70s and early '80s, when horror movies started to get darker and dirtier, comics followed suit. That same principle is what drives it today. As we see a rise in the creation of horror movies and TV shows, we see a rise in horror comics. It's as simple as saying, when the audience of a genre grows, the media for them will grow too. ... I think with every new year we have a new base of horror comic creators who have been influenced by something new. The future is going to be great." 🧛

FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTER @PCABEZUELO



**Rob Baily is still getting used** to wielding the power of *The Sword*—an ancient book of spells that has bound itself to him. He needs to do it quickly, though, because a number of mystics and supernatural creatures are out to get him. Luckily he has the help of Detective Anna Melendez and erstwhile mentor James Charles, who seems to be hiding his own dark secrets that may end up causing Rob a heap of trouble. *The Occultist* is an entertaining read filled with likeable characters, great art and an interesting, if somewhat familiar, concept. Rob gives off a very strong Peter Parker vibe as he tries to juggle his college studies and unrequited affection for Anna, all while fighting beasties. The mystery surrounding James imbues the story with a welcome air of unpredictability and the sense that something nasty is hiding just around the corner.



**Cryptozoic Man** is a strange, if not quite successful melding of concepts, which comes across as confused as the main character's appearance



(part man/ape/sea monster/bat thingy). Our protagonist, Alan Ostman, is the product of an alien experiment to better protect the Earth against hostile, other-dimensional invasions. It's a genuinely compelling idea but the execution—Ostman spends most of the issue having

flashbacks and trading poetic barbs with a pig-masked invader—is muddled and rather pedestrian, especially for a debut. However, Flanagan's art is a joy, filled with plenty of grotesque and disturbing imagery. I'm not entirely sold on the story but the art is enough to bring me back for more.

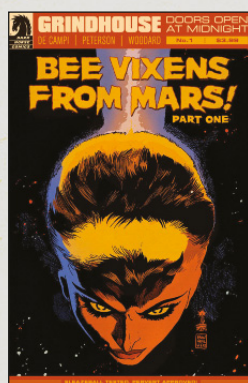
**Part Mission: Impossible** (the TV show), part *Avengers* (the British ones), and all fun, the *The Mysterious Strangers* is centred around a group of adventurers who investigate bizarre (often occult) occurrences around the world. This issue sees the team infiltrate the small town of Marfa, Texas, where teenagers are disappearing and turning up dead and drastically aged. Is it the work of aliens? Nazis? Or invaders from Dimension X looking for zombie slaves? Amidst the usual shenanigans we learn a bit



more about the group and its history, which stretches back to Elizabethan times. The book continues to be a great romp, nicely balancing humour, chills and style in a beautiful package that is visually kitschy but still has plenty of substance. My only complaint is that we weren't given enough info on the Strangers themselves, but that looks like it will be rectified soon. Groovy.

### Consider Grindhouse:

*Doors Open at Midnight* a cool attempt to replicate the old-fashioned exploitation movie experience on the comic page. First up is "Bee Vixens from Mars," in which some good ol' fashioned Southern belles are corrupted by an alien force and turned into man-killing Bee Women. The story has all the ingredients found in cheapie genre flicks of yore: gore, sex, sudden violence and a somewhat sleazy tone. And in a nice nod to the fake trailers seen in Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino's *Grindhouse*, the book includes some fake house ads done up in similar schlocky style. It's clear scribe Alex de Campi is a big fan of old horror and grindhouse films, and though it remains to be seen if the full experiment will be successful, it's off to a great start.



**The Liberty Annual 2013** (courtesy the Comic Book Legal Defense

Fund) is jam-packed with creators with plenty to say about censorship, media manipulation, internet misinformation, personal rights and civil liberties. While not all the stories are horror-related, the genre does make up a large part of the book, which is apt considering how often horror comics have been banned in the past. This might all sound rather heavy-handed, but the stories manage to be entertaining and thought-provoking thanks to the high calibre of contributors, including Richard Corben, Fabio Moon, Steve Seeley, Paul Tobin, Michael Moreci, Art Baltazar, Tim Seeley and others. We also have familiar characters such as the Hoax Hunters protecting

Sasquatch from irresponsible journalism, Hack/Slash duelling the notorious black bars of the Censor, and Charles de Ghoul facing the horrors of late-night infomercials. However, the highlight is "What If Wertham Was Right?" by Josh Williamson and Ron Chan, a not-quite cautionary tale of comics truly seducing the innocent. With all proceeds going towards the Fund's ongoing anti-censorship work, this could be the most important title you buy this year. 🧠



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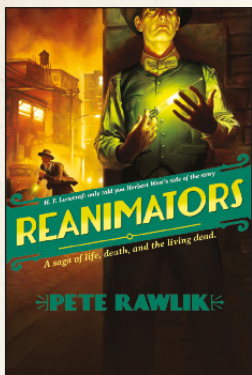


## REANIMATORS

Pete Rawlik  
Night Shade Books

The Lovecraft mythos has certainly seen its fair share of reinterpretation, having been adapted and reworked by countless weird fiction authors since even before its creator's death. Now Pete Rawlik has decided to give eldritch horror his best shot with his debut novel *Reanimators*.

As the name implies, the story is loosely connected to events that took place in Lovecraft's original tale "Herbert West – Reanimator." Here, Dr. Stuart Hartwell is a student of the Miskatonic University Medical School in Arkham, Massachusetts, along with his colleague Herbert West. After



Hartwell's parents are killed by one of West's failed experiments, he vows revenge and begins to uncover the mysteries of West's work in reanimation. Soon Hartwell begins his own experiments in reviving the dead, all the while trying to sabotage and surpass his colleague.

The story is told from the first-person perspective of Dr. Hartwell in a style that will be instantly familiar to fans of Lovecraft's work. Hartwell's motivations aren't always clear, and in the beginning it may seem a little strange that his revenge method of choice is to perfect the art of reanimation before West does. However, once the story gets going and new characters are introduced, it becomes an engaging alternative history piece that explores new Lovecraftian territory.

There are plenty of references to H.P.'s other work, most notably "The Dunwich Horror," as well. While it's not required that you're well-versed in Lovecraft to understand what's going on in *Reanimators*, it is highly recommended that you've at least read the original "Reanimator" tale, as many of the events that cross over really only make

sense once you've seen them from Herbert's perspective as well.

*Reanimators* is an excellent blend of horror, historical fiction, sci-fi and even a little steampunk. For anyone curious as to what happened after the experiments of Dr. Herbert West, this one is definitely for you.

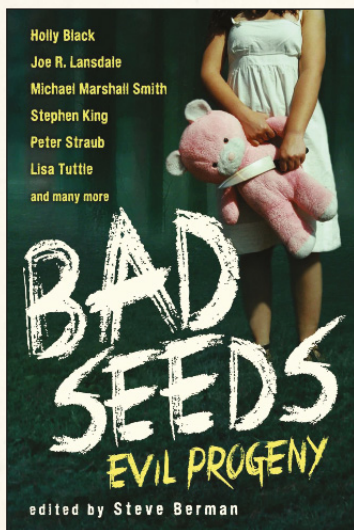
MIKE BEARDSALL

## BAD SEEDS: EVIL PROGENY

Steve Berman, ed.  
Prime Books

At first glance, *Bad Seeds: Evil Progeny*, with its roster of heavyweight masters of horror including Joe R. Lansdale, Stephen King and Peter Straub, looks like a must-read collection. Upon closer inspection, however, you'll find an anthology of reprints, republished from the last four decades of horror and science fiction, loosely based around the theme of evil (and) children. By that, I mean, sometimes the children are evil and sometimes evil things simply happen to children; the theme is ridiculously broad in this regard.

The book contains 27 short stories and flash-fiction pieces that range widely in style and structure. Not surprisingly, the collection doesn't flow like a cohesive anthology should. Some tales, such as Lansdale's "Duck Hunt" (a coming-of-age story about a boy's journey into manhood through hunting), have barely any horror content and are only loosely connected to the central theme, whereas Stephen King's "Children of the Corn" fits perfectly but is already widely familiar to horror readers, having been reprinted many times since it first appeared in *Penthouse* in 1977.



The most notable and worthwhile reads include Gemma Files' "By the Mark" (a poignant and beautifully descriptive look at the humiliating process of puberty), Cassandra Clare and Holly Black's "The Perfect Dinner Party" (a uniquely narrated short about vampire children and eternal youth) and Michael Kelly's "Princess of the Night" (his Halloween-themed flash-fiction piece about

a ghostly visitor).

Overall, *Bad Seeds: Evil Progeny* is a disappointing retread. Save your precious horror bucks for something fresh and novel, or consider picking up a couple of these stories as singles (many, such as Kelly's tale, are available as downloads on Amazon).

JESSA SOBCHUK

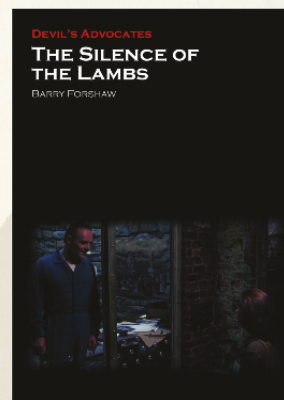
DEVIL'S ADVOCATES:  
THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

Barry Forshaw  
Auteur Publishing

Hot off a feature in last month's issue, the new *Devil's Advocates* series delivers an intelligent yet accessible examination of Jonathan Demme's ground-breaking adaptation of Thomas Harris' novel *The Silence of the Lambs*. While the book's title puts *Lambs* front and centre, author Barry Forshaw's critique also examines the multiple interpretations of its vicious and urbane antagonist, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, from Michael Mann's *Manhunter* to the recent eponymously named TV series, as well as the serial-killer genre in general.

Following standard academic procedure, Forshaw looks at *Lambs*' precursors (notably Robert Bloch and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*) and those that followed in its wake, with David Fincher getting extra special attention for both *Se7en* and *Zodiac*. It's Lecter, however – specifically Sir Anthony Hopkins' portrayal of him – which eats up most of the page count, with detailed looks at his turns in the original *Lambs*, *Hannibal* and the "reboot" of *Red Dragon*.

One of the greatest strengths of the *Devil's Advocates* series is its attempt to take some of the dry academic air out of film analysis, and this book is no exception. Forshaw is thorough in his examination of the film, yet it's to his credit that he never gets bogged down in the more pretentious tendencies of academia. His look at *Lambs* – its structure, symbolism and execution – is thorough but efficient, making the volume a relatively quick and easy read, and he doesn't dumb down the material







*Devil's Advocates: The Silence of the Lambs: On set with Anthony Hopkins and Jonathan Demme.*

in any way. Any attempt to expand the audience for critical film studies is worth applauding and Forshaw's work certainly counts.

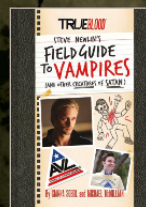
Readers may not agree with everything Forshaw claims; his overly glowing praise of Harris' *Red Dragon* as "a fictional construct that makes most other similar entries in the field seem like thin gruel" is debatable and his arguments for why Hopkins is the superior Lecter over *Manhunter*'s Brian Cox are tenuous and superficial. Yet, as far as film studies go, Forshaw's book leaves no stone unturned, making this easy to recommend to cinephiles and "Lecterphiles" alike.

RON MCKENZIE



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# THE GRIM READER



STEVE NEWLIN'S FIELD GUIDE TO VAMPIRES

Gianna Sobol and Michael McMillian  
Chronicle Books

Looking for the perfect stocking stuffer for the *True Blood* fan in your life? Here's one. "Written by" the show's religious-nut-cum-bloodsucker Steve Newlin and snarkily defaced with cheeky "corrections" from fictional TV vamps Eric and Pam, *Field Guide* continues to expand the world of the popular HBO series to the delight of *TB* devotees.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



JOHANNES CABAL: THE FEAR INSTITUTE

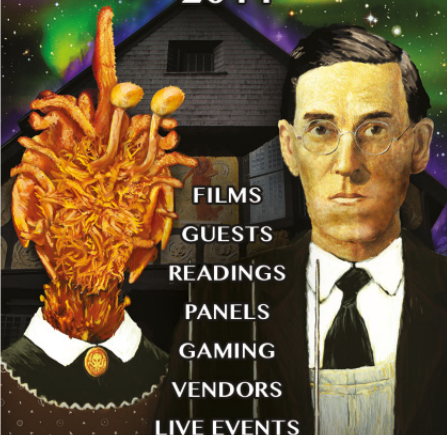
Jonathan L. Howard  
Thomas Dunne Books

Necromancer Johannes Cabal is employed by the Fear Institute to hunt down the essence of fear (a.k.a. the Phobic Animus itself). Set in the Dreamlands, a world created by H.P. Lovecraft, Johannes encounters an array of otherworldly creatures during his quest. With several absorbing plot twists and a cliffhanger that makes it clear that Howard is far from finished with this series, this is an enjoyably macabre nod to Lovecraft.

VANESSA FURTADO

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JOHN SZPUNAR'S **XEROX FEROX** DIGS DEEP INTO THE HISTORY  
OF HORROR'S SELF-PUBLISHING SCENE

# D.I.Y. or Die

by PAUL CORUPE

**B**EFORE THE INTERNET, BEFORE DESKTOP PUBLISHING SOFTWARE AND, IN MANY CASES, EVEN BEFORE PHOTOCOPY MACHINES, **POPPED UP IN EVERY CORNER STORE,**

many of horror's most enthusiastic and knowledgeable fans turned to creating their own fanzines — non-professional, often black and white publications that were more about passion than profit. While horror 'zines have largely escaped critical attention, John Szpunar's new collection *Xerox Ferox: The Wild World of the Horror Film Fanzine* (out now from Headpress) provides the first extensive look at the fascinating evolution of these self-published periodicals over the last 40 years. An impressive tome featuring almost 50 interviews with horror 'zine-sters, *Xerox Ferox* is a comprehensive history of how these handcrafted labours of love brought together a vast network of fans across the world to shine a spotlight on many unsung film heroes.

"Information on horror films — at least the kind of information that I was looking for — was scarce," says Szpunar of those pre-internet days. "The fanzines changed all of that. Horror 'zines introduced directors like Dario Argento, Lucio Fulci and Joe D'Amato to a new generation of fans, and their films were celebrated the world over. If the 'zines hadn't covered Peter Jackson's early efforts, he most likely wouldn't have had the fan-base that gave him the confidence to continue making films. That in itself is a very special thing."

A long-time reader of horror 'zines, Szpunar notes that he began collecting interviews with self-publishers back in 2006, when he was still running boutique DVD label Barrel Entertainment. As he talked to more writers and editors, he was taken back to the roots of his own fandom, a time when Chas. Balun's legendary *Deep Red* periodical became his gateway drug.

"*Deep Red* really spoke to me," explains Szpunar, who got the chance to interview

Balun for the book before the publisher's death in 2009. "Chas. and the gang had a way of making the readers feel like they were a part of things. A real community was being forged between fans and filmmakers, and that was a very healthy thing for the genre. ... In the second issue, Chas. wrote an article that changed my life. It was called 'Fanzines A-Z,' and it listed the contact information for a lot of publishers."

Along with 'zines such as *Subhuman* and *Sleazoid Express*, Szpunar soon found an incredible variety of publications in his mailbox. "You had cut-and-paste Xerox things like *Gore Gazette* and *Hi-Tech Terror*, newspaper tabloids like the *Monster Times* and the *Splatter Times*, and even pro-looking 'zines, including the later issues of *Ecco* and *European Trash Cinema*."

In 800 pages, *Xerox Ferox* details how these magazines laid the groundwork for modern horror print and web publications. The book features revealing Q&As with luminaries such as *Fangoria*'s Uncle Bob Martin and Michael Gingold, *Sleazoid Express*' Bill Landis and Jimmy McDonough, *Incredibly Strange Films* author Jim Morton and *Video Watchdog*'s Tim Lucas. Though the tastes of his interview subjects range from classic horror to 42nd Street shockers and Eurotrash treasures, Szpunar says they all share one important characteristic. "Passion — that's the main thing. In a world without the internet, publishing a fanzine took a lot of time, patience and commitment."

Aside from the interviews, the book's interior design also harkens back to 'zine-dom's wonderfully chaotic D.I.Y. aesthetic, full of replicated ink splashes and photocopy smears.

"Mark Critchell did the design, and I have to say that he did an amazing job," beams Szpunar. "I'll never forget getting the first layout sample — my jaw hit the floor."

Though the increased potential audience and relative inexpensiveness of online publishing had a devastating effect on fanzines, the format is far from dead. Szpunar notes that modern mags such as *Lunchmeat*, *HorrorHound Magazine* and *Weng's Chop* have found a place amongst today's glossy slicks and digital periodicals due to a certain sense of nostalgia.

"We're at a strange crossroads," Szpunar believes. "You've got kids collecting VHS tapes that were sold before they were born, and an older generation that's as active on the web as anyone else. But those veterans still love the old music that once made them dance. And believe me, that dance will go on long, long into the night..."



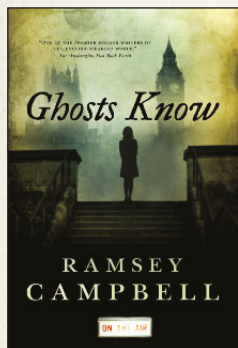


## GHOSTS KNOW

Ramsey Campbell

Tor

If you're not familiar with the work of horror master Ramsey Campbell, his latest novel, *Ghosts Know*, might not be the best spot to plunge into his oeuvre. While the novel is indisputably well-written, it doesn't stand up as a compelling horror story, nor is it a good example of the kind of tense and atmospheric dark fiction Campbell is capable of.



*Ghosts Know* follows hot-headed radio talk show host Graham Wilde, who is no stranger to controversy. His show, *Wilde Card*, attracts as many irate callers as it does loyal fans, but he really feels the heat when he invites purported psychic and ghost whisperer Frank Jasper onto the show for a live interrogation and debunking. While Wilde continues to attest that Jasper is a phony, Jasper seems to know too much about Wilde, recounting details from his past that even his girlfriend, Christine, isn't aware of. And when Jasper is hired by the police to work on a case involving a high school girl's disappearance, he begins to uncover evidence that implicates Wilde in her kidnapping and possible death.

While Campbell shows off his talent for creating a lively and convincing world, as a horror-mystery tale, the twists are too abrupt and result in some odd pacing. The prose is dialogue heavy, with plenty of internal monologues, which can be confusing and unappealing, especially if you're not keen on the cynical, strong-headed narrator. With the horror content in this novel almost non-existent, *Ghosts Know* would be much more appreciated by crime fiction enthusiasts than hardcore genre fans.

JESSA SOBCHUK

## THE WALKING DEAD: THE FALL OF THE GOVERNOR, PART ONE

Robert Kirkman and Jay Bonansinga

St. Martin's

I've said it before in a previous *Walking Dead* review: the Governor is the Darth Vader of *The Walking Dead*, a merciless tyrant in a dangerous universe trying to crush a ragtag rebel force with his superior resources. The fortified town of Woodbury is his Death Star, an army of loyal followers his stormtroopers, and that duster coat his version of a black cape. In Robert Kirkman and Jay Bonansinga's *Walking Dead* novels – which expand the world of the comic book series, not the TV show – we're given the Gov's detailed back story of how a good, loving man becomes a monster when he loses everyone he cares about. It's like what George Lucas did with the *Star Wars* prequels and Anakin Skywalker, except not shitty.

Throughout *The Rise of the Governor*, *The Road to Woodbury* and, now, *The Fall of the Governor, Part One*, the authors focus on the villain, but also Woodbury itself and how several of its residents fit in to its dictatorship. This installment finally brings us into contact with the comic's mainstays, Rick, Michonne and Glen, during the period when they're captured, tortured and mutilated in Woodbury. But, of course, the timeline unfolds through the viewpoint of the Governor, as well as Lilly Caul, a minor character in the comics who was the main protagonist in *Road*. Here she's adapting to life in the unforgiving town after a failed coup attempt, finding love and new reasons to survive.

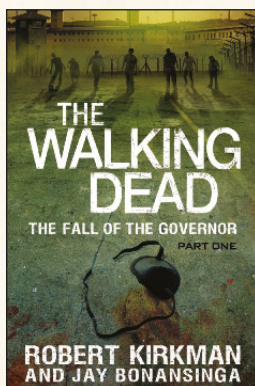
The book takes us up to the point at which Michonne escapes with Rick and Glen, but then goes back to torture her tormentor. And does she ever go to town on him. The tale gives new meaning to "excruciating detail," proving every bit as violent and ugly as the comics, though not as well-written (e.g., "Her smile is a clown's grin of madness and hate" – *pfitt!*).

The larger roadblock is that these stories focus on known events, so fans of the comic know the outcomes for most of these characters already, while those only familiar with the TV show will just be confused. On the other hand – or stump, if you're Rick (like Vader, the Gov sliced off our hero's hand!) – there is now an unparalleled level of detail to this epic storyline, which is rewarding... as long as you're *really* into the *The Walking Dead*.

The saga concludes in the next novel, presumably, with the Governor's attack on Rick's group held up at the prison.

As Vader would say, "We meet again at last. The circle is now complete."

DAVE ALEXANDER



## LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

MONSTERS AND HELEN MARSHALL

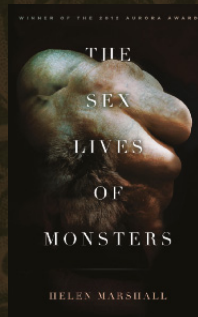
Horror poetry. Those words either invoke the works of Edgar Allan Poe or awful teenage scribbles about vampires and serial killers. But when done well – as in Helen Marshall's *The Sex Lives of Monsters* (Kelp Queen Press) – that intersection of the grotesque and the lyrical is absolutely sublime. This is illustrated perfectly in Marshall's "Witchcraft": *And she was young – sealed so tightly within the coffin of her own making, eyes, breasts, heart, fingers placed in copper-capped jars. A witch must know her spells through and through.*

*She must sleep for a hundred years, while the thorns curl about her wrists.*

I recently cornered Marshall, hot off her British Fantasy Award win for Best Newcomer, to talk dark poetry.

**Tell me about the collection's weird, disturbing cover.**

I commissioned the cover art from the very talented Erik Mohr. ... Somehow the cover manages to come across as sexy and horrific and beautiful all at the same time – that's what really captivates me about it.



**What's the appeal of monsters for you?**

Monsters are, at their very heart, outsiders. They are incomplete beasts. Or incomplete men. There is something missing, or something added, that pushes them outside the boundaries of what we traditionally accept as beautiful. But to me that position as an outsider also makes them intensely interesting because they allow us to see ourselves. If you want to know yourself, ask someone who hates you.

**Where do you find your poetic inspiration?**

Growing up I read a huge amount of mythology. [It] provided me with my original poetic vocabulary. ... I still find myself drawn to myths and fairy tales, in part because they are so easily accepted when you are a child, but as you grow older your perspective changes. The strangeness of a woman being seduced by an enormous white swan becomes horrific because you try to understand it in realistic terms. ... I like the contrast between the poetic and the earthy, between the romantic and the horrific. I like the dissonance of it.

**There seems to be an undercurrent of sadness running through *The Sex Lives of Monsters*.**

For me, the collection is about imperfection. The brokenness of relationships. The brokenness of people. And love and sex by their very nature seem to offer a way through that imperfection: they promise wholeness. There's nothing more sad than the first crack in a relationship – the moment when you discover your partner is as human as you are.

**Does poetry allow you to explore monsters in a different manner than, say, writing stories?**

I love the vibrancy and immediacy of poetry. And the lack of justification for it. ... Poetry operates by dream logic. The reader is willing to leave behind a sense of expectation. And that means you can get away with more.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



# THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

## THIS MONTH: THE HAPPY UNDERTAKER MYSTERIES

There's something warm and inviting about Drazen Kozjan's illustrated web series, *The Happy Undertaker Mysteries*. Spawned from a one-page panel comic (pictured) about what he describes as a "cheerful, whistling, morbid, romantic supernatural being," the first installment was posted on Kozjan's Hypnotik Eye blog ([hypnotikye.blogspot.ca](http://hypnotikye.blogspot.ca)) in 2007.

Based just outside of Toronto, Kozjan is a full-time illustrator, creating children's books and storyboarding animation for shows such as *The Neverending Story* and *George Shrinks*. The artist says *The Happy Undertaker Mysteries* is a reaction to, more than a dark extension of, his day job work.

"Both mediums have a certain amount of collaboration, as well as clear, understandable storytelling. I'm more attracted to mystery, ambiguity and weird juxtapositions, and it's not the kind of thing you can do in a Saturday morning cartoon."

Kozjan is influenced by '50s satirical cartoonist Ronald Searle, animation background designer Paul Julian, Edgar Allan Poe and, most noticeably, legendary cartoonist Edward Gorey. The main difference is Kozjan's toons are wordless, giving his strips a surreal, melancholy quality. For example, in one strip a red bird chirps a single note and dies, falling from a creepy tree into the resurrecting hands of the Undertaker, who sets its soul free.

"What I find so inspiring about Gorey is all the experiments he did and the variety of the work. I love his books like *The Soppy Thursday* just as much if not more than *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*. The original drawings are even more impressive than the printed books, the linework is incredible. ... [But] if I felt *The Happy Undertaker* was very similar to the work of people I admire, I wouldn't do it. I understand the comparisons – some pages more than others, perhaps – but I think it stands up on its own or it least it gives me a different feeling from the other stuff I like, so I feel there is a reason to continue doing it."

Raised in a small Croatian village where superstition is commonplace, it's no surprise that his work has taken on a morbid European aesthetic and tone. One could easily assume some of the Happy Undertaker's exploits may have been inspired by the stories of folklore and tales of local terrors passed down by his grandparents.

"More than any specific traditional folk tales, what I feel influenced by is just the mood of the stories I heard growing up," Kozjan explains. "My mother and grandmother would sing me a lovely lullaby at night about a rabbit who freezes to death in the winter. These stories were always told as if you were in a '30s horror movie. Curses, cursed objects, superstitions and how they weave through peoples lives are endlessly interesting to me. There was a certain kind of dark humour inherent in some of these stories, along with a brooding sadness as well."



For now, *The Happy Undertaker's* archive can be seen at [strangekids.com](http://strangekids.com) or on Kozjan's aforementioned site, but there are plans for a self-published book, collecting 75 to 100 pages worth of work, and Kozjan has even been working on a creepy young adult novel. In addition, Mike Mignola recently reached out to him via Facebook and has been a big supporter, sharing Kozjan's work around.

"We've traded original art and have even talked about doing something together." 🐼





# THE GORE MET

**MENU:** A SECOND HELPING OF A RAPE REVENGE REMAKE



**I**f you're going to make a sequel to the remake of 2010's *I Spit on Your Grave*, how do you approach it? Make a film about Jennifer Hills (Sarah Butler) getting gang-raped and exacting violent revenge on her attackers... *again*? That's not going to go over well with any audience.

So you'll need to create a new main character. One who will have to be brutalized too, and who will also revisit her tormentors with extreme prejudice. In other words, you're left with little choice but to make the same film again, only the main attraction – the rape and revenge aspects – will have to be expanded upon if you hope to offer the audience a cinematic experience with modicum of difference.

Director Steven R. Monroe understood this. His follow-up to his remake, *I Spit on Your Grave 2* (2013), is the kind of film that the adjective "polarize" is meant to apply to. Yes, it's unnecessary, repellent and exploitive. Viewed objectively, it's not a bad film, should be repellent, and is only as exploitive as any other rape/revenge movie.

The plot adheres to the template laid out the 1978 original and followed in the remake. Katie (Jemma Dallender) moves to New York with dreams of making it as a fashion model. She is advised to beef up her portfolio, but being short of money, answers a want ad for models that promises a free fashion shoot. She meets a sketchy Eastern European photographer, Ivan (Joe Absolom), and his two layabout brothers, in a grungy basement studio. Flashbulbs go off until Ivan encourages Katie to "show a little skin." Indignant, Katie terminates the session. Later, Georgy (Yavor Baharov), who was obviously smitten with her, turns up at her apartment door with a USB stick full of photos.

That night, she awakes in bed to find Georgy watching her. Her screams bring a neighbour to



her aid, but in a genuinely horrific moment, Georgy stabs him multiple times and leaves him to bleed out on the floor while he rapes Katie in front of him. When Georgy finishes, he ties Katie up and calls his brothers for help. They show up and force her to swallow a drug...

Katie wakes up naked on a dirty mattress in a dank basement, chained to a pole and in the midst of being raped. She is further abused before escaping out a small window – only to discover that she's in Bulgaria! She's picked up in the street by the police and whisked to apparent safety, but in an obvious plot twist taken straight from the remake, she winds up back in the basement.

She's raped again, by a wealthy, cattle-prod-wielding elite, then tossed in a crate and buried alive by her captors (there are few base fears this films doesn't exploit). Through

an unfortunate quirk of Communist-era architecture, she once again escapes her seemingly dire fate, recovers her health, and delivers the expected righteous vengeance.

*I Spit on Your Grave 2* is as ugly as any film about rape should be. In no way does it glorify or

propagate "rape culture." This isn't stopping critics both professional and amateur from contemptuously excoriating it as an example of that and knocking it for being "bad." *I Spit on Your Grave 2* isn't bad; it has high production values, superb set designs, powerful performances and gorgeous cinematography. It's grim from the get-go and chock-a-block with stomach-churning gore, from tortuous knife cuts smeared with feces, to guts churned with an industrial drain snake, to testicles crushed in a vice.

Reality dictates that, sadly, we need films like this. The home video release of *I Spit on Your Grave 2* is timely, given a couple of high-profile incidents in Canada last September of first-year university students exhibiting a thoughtlessly cavalier attitude towards rape during frosh week festivities. Campuses at two major universities resounded with chants that went "Y-O-U-N-G at UBC, we like 'em young, Y is for your sister, O is for oh so tight, U is for underage, N is for no consent, G is for go to jail." Perhaps those kids would benefit from watching this.

The film looks superb on both the DVD and Blu-ray discs included in this package (from Anchor Bay), but the only supplemental material is five minutes of rightfully deleted expository scenes. Small matter, you'll have had your bloody fill after watching the main feature.

Happy holidays!





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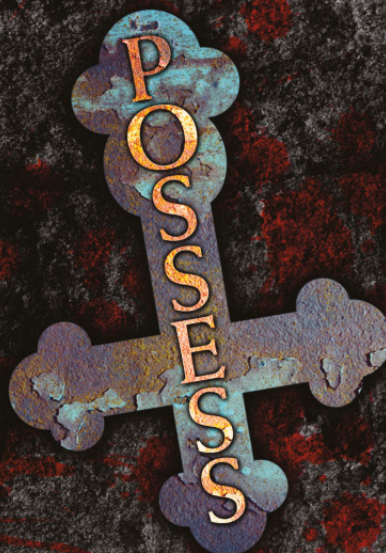
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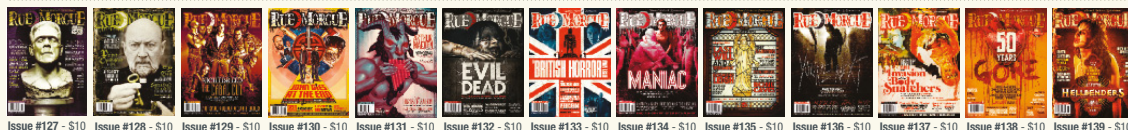
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# AUDIO DROME

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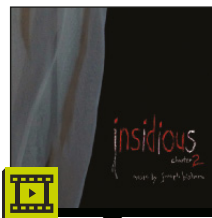
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ARRIVAL

REVIEWS BY MARK R. HASAN, KIEL HUME, AARON VON LUPTON,  
GEORGE PACHECO AND GLENN TILSON



## INSIDIOUS: CHAPTER 2

SOUNDTRACK

Joseph Bishara

VOID RECORDINGS

Joseph Bishara's been the main go-to soundtrack man for makers of slow-burning thrillers requiring an atmospheric mélange of sonic design, orchestral sound mobiles and shock-specific musical stabs. He's extremely good at sandwiching his material into curvy, pliable sounds, but after *Insidious*, *Dark Skies* and *The Conjuring*, the music – like the films – displays a certain sameness. *Insidious 2* is notable for having a (comparatively) greater degree of melodic material; the use of chamber strings and occasional piano in "New Home" is lovely, but those moments remain fleeting due to the current convention in which filmmakers seem to abhor themes and mandate creepy soundscapes instead. Shriill, insect-like strings and snarling bass drones effectively destabilize one's nerves, but within the score's rare moments of lightness (often a minute or less), Bishara shows he can still develop richer musical colours from his extensive sonic palette; he just needs more exceptional subject matter than this.

MRH ☠️ 1/2



## L'ISOLA DEI MORTI VIVENTI

SOUNDTRACK

Call Me Greenhorn

(INDEPENDENT)

Having scored the action/comedy web series *They Call Me Superseven*,

Call Me Greenhorn (a.k.a. Magnus Selbergren) expanded his love for retro sounds by crafting a score for a non-existent Italian zombie feature. Using an instrumental palette pretty much restricted to '80s and '90s drum machines, sequencers and synthesizers, *L'Isola* is an overt homage to composer Fabio Frizzi (and maybe more than a little to Goblin as well), but aside from emulating the ascending synth vocals and beat pulse from *Zombi*, Selbergren has his own set of mournful themes, ditty source variations ("Caribbean Cruise") and cheeky action cues ("Investigative Reporter East"). Warbling drones, pulses and spacey chords permeate cues such as "Something Is Watching You," and, as such, it takes a few listens to appreciate Selbergren's meticulous design. *L'Isola Dei Morti Viventi* is likely to be best relished by connoisseurs of trippy homages.

MRH ☠️☠️



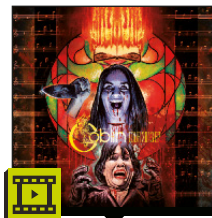
## MAJEURE

Romance Language EP

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE, LTD

Consider *Romance Language* a new stop-gap EP from *Zombi* drummer A.E. Pattera. His Majeure project delivers two tracks of spacey synth soundscapes and danceable beats that wouldn't sound out of place on a '70s sci-fi soundtrack or disco dance floor. The smooth-yet-propulsive blend of John Carpenter/Alan Howarth-styled stalking synth groove and Giorgio Moroder pop ambience takes its time erecting intriguing melodies atop Pattera's persistent, percussive writing style. There is a sense of urgency and energy to the music, making this a more lighthearted version of *Zombi*, on which he collaborates with Steve Moore. Majeure lives on its own, and one wonders if *Romance Language* is a taste of things to come on the third *Zombi* album. GP ☠️☠️☠️ 1/2

AMBIENT



## NEW GOBLIN

Tour 2013 EP

DEATH WALTZ RECORDS

Death Waltz' four-track *New Goblin Tour 2013 EP* (available on the band's website) features four meaty cuts of classic Goblin tunes that reflect the recent reunion tour's musical material – a seamless interpolation of film and non-film works. The biggest delight for fans isn't just hearing Goblin veterans playing in solid form, but everyone's fidelity to the original arrangements, especially bassist Titta Tani in the lengthy "Tenebre," with bandmate Bruno Previtali adding a slight heavy metal touch on drums. Massimo Morante has a nice short guitar solo on "Roller," and Claudio Simonetti and Maurizio Guarini recreate the analog keyboards and organ fugues in "Suspiria" and "Deep Red," respectively. The former gets a revised finale with panning vocals and chord changes, and Simonetti performs the vocal material letter-perfect in both "Suspiria" and "Tenebre." The audio engineering and LP pressing

ROCK

are sublime – raising anticipation for the full blood-red LP set. MRH ☠️☠️ 1/2



## CREEPSVILLE '13: A TRIBUTE TO FORBIDDEN DIMENSION

ROCK

Various

6' + RECORDS

The Calgary garage-rock institution known as Forbidden Dimension, essentially the project of one Jackson Phibes and an entourage of musicians, has a quarter-century legacy of taking the cheesiest B-movie themes to levels of brilliance via catchy fuzzed-out guitar and demonically clever lyrics, wrapped in wicked cartoony artwork (by Phibes) that adorns the group's stack of collectible records and singles. Forbidden Dimension has never achieved much more than cult-level success, though, so it would have been cool to see some bigger-name artists on this tribute album. There are certainly some choice cuts, such as Mummula's haunting, neck-bobbing stab at "Creepsville" and

## THE GOLEM

HobGoblin

NOVEMBER FIRE RECORDINGS

Strephon Taylor's prior versions of silent classics *Nosferatu* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* featured music, sound effects and new dialogue, but admittedly the strongest element within these reinterpreted soundtracks is the prog-rock music that he crafts and performs with his band HobGoblin. Spread over two engrossing CDs, *The Golem* score unfolds like a classic rock album, with Taylor planting his thematic seeds in the early tracks, and developing them in tandem with the silent film's slower pacing and less frenetic montages. The result is a score that's gradually immersive, aided by sharp orchestrations, which include some tender keyboard solos and instrumental pairings with grungy electric guitar, agitated strings, gothic organ chords and Moog emulations. The writing is also more confident, and there's a sense that with *The Golem*, Taylor found the right groove to express the potent creativity and musicianship of his band.

MRH ☠️☠️☠️

SOUNDTRACK





# LISTEN *to* MY NIGHTMARE

Retro horror fans tend to obsess over a few different things: poster art, VHS boxes and, of course, music because none of those things really exist today the way they did in the '70s and '80s. There is no equal to the sounds of John Carpenter and Fabio Frizzi, which is why I love the current trend of artists making original music inspired by them, including Oscillotron (*RM#133*) and Espectrostatic (*RM#138*). But for my money no one quite gets the old school horror music vibe like Detroit's Slasher Dave, who released his debut, *Spookhouse*, on Bellyache Records, right before Halloween.

*Spookhouse* takes listeners into a world of VHS horror with thirteen tracks of pulsating synth songs that recall Carpenter's *Halloween* and *Prince of Darkness*. It's a departure sonically, though not in content, for the musician, who's best known as the vocalist for Halloween-themed doom metal band Acid Witch.

"I'm a *huge* fan and collector of vintage Halloween spooky sounds/music records, and John Carpenter is my biggest influence," Dave explains. "I've always wanted to combine my love for both into an album that captures the essence of Halloween night through music, much like Carpenter's three *Halloween* movie soundtracks, without it having anything to do with a particular movie."

While the album is entirely based on fictional horror concepts, titles such as "It's Awake," "House of Screams" and "I Heard the Devil Lives There" create a distinct retro vibe, conjuring memories of schlocky shot-on-video slashers and dusty video boxes.

"I primarily wrote the song names I wanted on the album, and tried to capture what I pictured visually with the music," says Dave. "There are a couple movies which heavily influenced me, and I think any horror soundtrack fan can quickly pick them up. The original *Halloween*, II and III soundtracks are a major influence on anything I do musically."

Adding to the sleazy feel is the album artwork, done by Dave himself, who also works as a graphic designer. The cover for *Spookhouse* directly



"A lot of my graphic design influence comes from old VHS sleeves and boxes," explains Dave. "Even as a kid when I used to go to the video store and rent horror films, I'd spend hours in the store just looking at the crazy art on the boxes. It was such a crazy time for movies and art."

AARON VON LUPTON

Breathe Knives' tortured take on "Body of a Boy, Mind of a Monster," but for the most part, *Creepsville 13* can be described as mostly unknowns doing their best FD body-snatching performance. (*Rue Morgue*'s own Tomb Dragomir also contributes a track.) Then again, considering Phibes' prowess on the axe, even an imitation is admirable. **AVL** ☠☠



## THE HOUSE OF HAUNT

PSYCHOBILLY

Come to Mummy EP

INDEPENDENT

*Come to Mummy*, the latest EP from horror rockabilly outfit The House of Haunt, sounds like a can't-miss scenario on paper: campy psychobilly, fun costumed live show and song titles that hit all the right notes, such as "Date with the Devil" and "Evil Feeds." But somehow something goes wrong in the execution (pun intended!). The songs seem a bit too timid for a let's-go-zombie-hunting-down-route-66 kind of psychobilly band. They come closest to living up to their potential on "Evil Feeds," the only real party-starter on the EP. But the rest of the disc, from opener "Valentines Day" to closer "The House of Haunt" are slow, tame, rhythm numbers in the standard one-two mode. Still, The House of Haunt has a lot going for it, so while *Come to Mummy* might not be a monument of rockabilly horror, it'll be interesting to see what the band comes up with next.

KH ☠☠



## THE DEAD MORTICIANS

PUNK

Back to the Grave

BURIAL VAULT RECORDS

The Dead Morticians play a primitive style of horror punk. It's fast and heavy enough in the drums and bass to cross over into metal territory, while retaining a very basic songwriting formula in their tales of death and the supernatural. The musicianship is decent enough, but it's undone by a vocalist

who seems to be doing a half-hearted attempt at the tried-and-true Glenn Danzig/Dave Vanian stylings – only it comes off less like a croon and more like an over-the-hill horror host reading nursery rhymes. In short, The Dead Morticians are probably having more fun doing this than anyone will ever have listening to it. The anthemic head-banger "No One Left Alive" hints at the band's sonic potential, but overall *Back to the Grave*'s fangs simply aren't sharp enough to leave a mark. **AVL** ☠



## NOCTUM

METAL

Final Sacrifice

METAL BLADE

According to the press release, Noctum's *Final Sacrifice* is based around a horror story, and each song is part of the overall narrative. Unfortunately, without a lyric sheet it's a little difficult to know what the tale is about! Repeated listens reveal something about a damned soul seeking release from Hell via the titular sacrifice, but who knows? Musically, this is straight-up heavy metal, the obvious reference point being Mercyful Fate, as David Indelöf's vocal phrasing instantly recalls King Diamond (and the main riff in "Void of Emptiness" resembles Fate's "Gypsy"! ). Not that Noctum are a mere tribute act, though. Riffs and arrangements are less convoluted than those of their Danish forebears, and boast some catchy singalong choruses. Tempos range from trot to canter, eschewing the frantic gallop or funereal plod of extreme metal, while flute adds atmosphere to "The Revisit." There's enough personality present to show Noctum is its own band – and a fine one at that. Final sacrifice? Let's hope not. **GT** ☠☠☠





LYRICIST JEREMY WAGNER OF THE REFORMED **BROKEN HOPE**, BRINGS HIS DEATH METAL TALES TO BOTH THE STAGE AND THE PAGES OF HIS HORROR FICTION

# SING OF THE GLUTTONS

BY  
AARON  
VON LUPTON



**T**HERE ARE THOUSANDS OF DEATH METAL BANDS THAT GROWL ABOUT MURDER AND TORTURE, BUT WHILE THE VAST MAJORITY

do it to shock and profane, Chicago's Broken Hope has always positioned itself as a legitimate horror band, each song functioning as a slice of mini fright fiction penned by founding guitarist Jeremy Wagner (pictured above, far left). For years however, it seemed that Broken Hope's name would also be its destiny.

The death metal band had five gore-soaked albums and a steadily growing fan base when things officially crumbled due to creative differences in 2002. Attempts by Wagner and vocalist Joe Ptacek to reform were unsuccessful, and when Ptacek committed suicide in 2010, Broken Hope's future was on life support. But like any gore flick fan knows, the story never really ends.

After making a commitment to try again with previous bassist Shaun Glass, Wagner found new members, notably vocalist Damian Leski from the similarly brutal Gorgasm. After a 2012 tour with Obituary, the new Broken Hope recently released the comeback album *Omen of Disease* on Century Media.

"I wish Joe Ptacek was here to see what I see now," says Wagner, backstage before his band's October 8 show in Toronto with Deicide. "From young kids to people in their 50s, there is a new respect for the band. In fact, I remember playing Toronto last year specifically, because that is where I first realized how broad our fan base had grown since we went away."

Leski's growling delivery lives up to Ptacek's guttural legacy, and *Omen of Disease*'s high-end production and technical proficiency reflects the output of musicians who have honed their craft. More importantly, Wagner once again pulls out a series of horrific lyrical scenarios for each of the songs.

On one of those tales of terror, "The Flesh Mechanic," he details the grisly exploits of a tortured artist.

"I got the idea for 'The Flesh Mechanic' when I went to the Body Worlds exhibit," he explains. "Some of it is crazy. There's one piece that is an entire head

disassembled and it's all suspended, from the teeth to the eyeballs. What kind of macabre imagination would you have to possess to do that? The Flesh Mechanic is a twisted artist. The people that do the plastination in Body Worlds are very ethical and responsible; my character is very warped and disturbed and twisted."

A video for the song features loads of goopy practical effects by FX artist Jamie Grove (*The Devil's Rejects*, *The Cabin in the Woods*).


"I don't want to be so bold as to say not since Michael Jackson's 'Thriller' has there been a horror video this good but I'll tell you what, I think we set the bar. It's really graphic and Jamie made this thing look like we spent 200k on it, even though the budget was hardly that."

Wagner occasionally bases his lyrics around some of his favourite horror films, pulling from *The Entity* on the song "Predacious Poltergeist."

"At the end of *The Entity*, Barbara Hershey comes home and the front door slams shut and this disembodied voice says in her ear 'Welcome home, cunt.' So we re-did that line at the beginning of the song. It's based on the novel *The Entity*, and the movie as well."

The band gets even more ambitious on the track "Rendered into Lard," with a fake horror movie skit outro. The song details a cannibalistic tribe and ends with band members and their families acting out the roles of a backwoods family before they tuck into some flesh and organs.

The attention Wagner gives his band's lyrics make sense, given that he's also a published writer, with one novel, *The Armageddon Chord* (2011), to his name, as well as various short stories including "Romance Ain't Dead," which appeared in the zombie romance anthology *Hungry for Your Love* (2010).

"That story put me on the map as far as getting published. I've got a couple new novels that are done, actually, but it seems to be taking forever to edit them. I'm hoping they come out next year. ... I've been writing horror fiction since I was a little kid, and I always say my lyrics are like pieces of horror flash fiction. I love having Broken Hope entwined in horror. It just works right together." 





# PLAY DEAD



**NOW PLAYING** > THE WOLF AMONG US, THE LAST OF US DLC, PACIFIC RIM, ZOMBIE! ZOMBIE! ZOMBIE!, BEYOND THE DEAD, MONSTER LOVES YOU!



## THE WOLF AMONG US

PS3, Xbox 360, PC  
Telltale Games

Hot off the success of 2012's *Walking Dead* game, Telltale brings us another licensed property, this one based on Vertigo Comics' *Fables*. Set twenty years before the events in the graphic novels, the story takes place in Fabletown, the hidden New York borough that's home to various exiled characters and creatures of folklore and legend. Keeping a low profile and blending in with the "mundanes" (us humans) through spells and "glamours" is of great importance to the Fables. When one of their own is murdered, that secrecy is threatened and it's up to Bigby Wolf (as in Big Bad) to find the killer before it all falls apart.

*Fables'* mature urban fantasy/film noir tone — rife with violence, coarse language and sexuality — holds appeal for horror gamers. Much like *The Walking Dead*, *The Wolf Among Us* utilizes point-and-click gameplay (along with some quick time events to liven things up) to gather clues, investigate crime scenes and interact with characters and items. The way you handle the character interactions affects the narrative, so while the game is light on button-mashing, it's very dependent on "social strategy." And since the mechanics are more or less a means of story progression, it's a good thing that the tale is told well. Every aspect of the game's



narrative components, from the crisp cel-shaded graphics, to the low-key and moody soundtrack, to the exceptional writing and voice work, immerses the player in the world of *The Wolf Among Us*. It's not perfect — occasional graphics glitches pop up to slow things down — but if you're able to overlook that, you'll find yourself engaged in Bigby's mission

and the repercussions of that mission for the inhabitants of Fabletown.

As is Telltale's way, *A Wolf Among Us* is broken into episodic installments with Episode 1 ("Faith") available now. Episodes can be purchased individually or through the more economical Season Pass. But regardless of how you decide to pony up, you will definitely want to take the trip to Fabletown.

**RON MCKENZIE**



**HEADSHOTS:** BRILLIANT PRODUCTION VALUES, ENGROSSING STORYLINE, VARIABLE OUTCOMES  
**MISFIRES:** OCCASIONAL GLITCHES, SIMPLISTIC GAMEPLAY MAY TURN OFF hardcore gamers



## THE LAST OF US: ABANDONED TERRITORIES DLC

PS3  
Naughty Dog/Sony

With *The Last of Us* securing its position as one of the best survival-horror zombie games of the current console generation, it was only a matter of time before Naughty Dog rolled out a DLC. *Abandoned Territories* is a rotter-free (and practically horror-free) map pack for the Factions multiplayer component. Choosing between "Fireflies" or "Hunters," teams of four humans compete against each other for supplies and equipment to build up their ranks online. Don't expect to run-and-gun this one, as, much like the single-player game, life is cheap and death is quick. Stealth, patience and tactics are all required to survive and succeed. *Abandoned Territories'* new maps offer warfare in a sprawling, abandoned bus depot, a two-tiered skirmish in a bookstore, tight door-to-door battles in a desolate suburb and nocturnal combat on the main street of a small town aptly named Hometown. The variety of locales and terrains will ensure plenty of replay value for those already "deep in the shit" with Factions' ongoing conflict, but if you're more of a go-it-alone, single-player sort pass over this one, as there's nothing of interest for you here.

**RON MCKENZIE**



**HEADSHOTS:** DECENT VARIETY OF MAPS, HIGH REPLAY VALUE  
**MISFIRES:** VIRTUALLY BEREF OF HORROR CONTENT AND NO ZOMBIES



## PACIFIC RIM

PSN/Xbox Live/PC  
Yukes Media

Much like the movie, the game tie-in for *Pacific Rim* is simplicity personified: giant robots punching giant

monsters in their giant faces. It's a meat-and-potatoes brawler with minimal customization and button-mashing gameplay. Also, like the film, it still happens to be quite a bit of fun. You choose between Jaegers and Kaiju, then you work your way up the fight roster, gaining medals and upgrading your fighters as you do so. You can also compete online in multiplayer mode, should you be itching for more competition, but don't expect anything deeper than that here. If you're an über-fan of the film, you'll definitely want to give this a spin. One final caveat, though: not all combatants are instantly playable. Some upgrades and supplemental Kaiju and Jaeger are only available through online purchase but, at a minimal charge, filling your battle roster is less than painful. An inexpensive way to kill some time... and monsters.

**RON MCKENZIE**



**HEADSHOTS:** EASY TO PICK UP, LOOKS GREAT  
**MISFIRES:** MINIMAL GAMEPLAY VARIETY, LOW REPLAY VALUE





## ZOMBIE! ZOMBIE! ZOMBIE! HD

iPad  
Big Fish Games, Inc

Another issue, another month of the undead overrunning the Play Dead section of the mag. If you're wondering when the fatigue and backlash will finally kick in, you're not alone. That said, free action-puzzler *Zombie! Zombie! Zombie!* is actually deserving of a spot on your device. The conceit here is, er, dead simple: you're the militia and hordes of zombies are rapidly encroaching on your position and you need to stop them. To do this, tap any three matching zombies to create a triangle, which destroys all the rotters within it. As fun as this

mechanic is, it would get boring fast if you didn't have to pass ever-more-difficult challenges (similar to the level progression in popular puzzler *Candy Crush*). Along the way, you acquire bonus weapons that help make short work of the deaders, be it a samurai to slice and dice 'em into tiny little chunks or a tank to shoot the shit out of 'em. You can also spend the in-game coin on improved armour, firepower, etc. Levels last 30 seconds to two minutes, making them good bite-size time-wasters, though beware: fail at enough puzzles and you'll have to sit *Zombie! Zombie! Zombie!* out until your health meter refills or



you shell out some real-world coin to recharge it. This isn't a dealbreaker, however; if anything it'll just help keep *Zombie! Zombie! Zombie!*'s inherently addictive gameplay from swallowing all your best-made plans – at least until the next undead app hits the open market, in three, two, one...

MONICA S. KUEBLER



**HEADSHOTS:** FUN, FAST AND FURIOUS GAMEPLAY, APPROPRIATELY CHALLENGING  
**MISFIRES:** SOME UPGRADES MUST BE BOUGHT WITH REAL MONEY, EASY TO MIS-CLICK ZOMBIES



## BEYOND THE DEAD

iPhone, iPad  
GREE, Inc

Oh look, another zombie apocalypse in the Apple app store. *Beyond the Dead* is an extremely derivative farming/building-type game wherein you construct a base, buy units and go on missions – only with an undead theme. The game's narrative takes a loose stab at reconstructing how the zombie outbreak happened, and between brief chunks of exposition, you play a plucky survivor (you can choose from one of several skins) who must train himself up, fortify his camp, attract other survivors (and get them trained) and go on missions to kill zombies and find clues about the out-

break. There's also a multiplayer aspect in which you choose your five best survivors to go head to head with another player's top five. This is not an actual battle, mind you, just a math calculation. The game really excels with its handsomely illustrated player portrait cards for a large number of the available survivors, including the Cheerleader and Heavy Metal Guitarist. But it falters when it comes to the zombie action. The fight mechanics are abysmal: you enter a themed zone (hospital, army compound, etc.) with zombies roaming around in it, but they make no move to attack you, then you simply tap on them to destroy



them. While not much for combat, *Beyond the Dead* is big on survivor stats. So, if you like stats (a.k.a. zombie accounting), this might thrill you. Everyone else, shamble away...

BRENTON BENTZ



**HEADSHOTS:** GREAT DETAIL ON SURVIVOR CARDS, ADDICTIVE CAMPSITE PLANNING  
**MISFIRES:** ZOMBIE BASHING IS SAD, TOO MANY STATS, WHY FIGHT OTHER SURVIVORS?



## MONSTER LOVES YOU!

iPad, iPhone, Android, PC  
Radial Games Corp.

Have you always identified more with monsters than monster hunters? If so, the family-friendly *Monster Loves You!* is for you, though calling it a game in the traditional sense would be a mite misleading. *Monster Loves You!* is the story of raising a monster – you! – from its infantile state in the creation vat, up through monsterling, adolescent, adult and, eventually, elder stages, assuming you survive that long. The game unfolds via the choices that

are presented to you as you progress through your critter's life cycle, much like a Choose Your Own Adventure tale or a personality quiz. The decisions you make – for example, whether to eat your fellow vat-mate or help a human create a Frankenstein-like abomination – affect your ferocity, honesty, bravery, cleverness, kindness and respect stats. The higher the stats, the more success you'll have with certain story threads. In-game achievements are unlocked by exploring the different life paths one can take. *Monster Loves You!*



is cute, clever and bristling with dark humour. Though it offers limited replayability for adults, consider this a perfect diversion for monster-loving youngsters who will no doubt dig the squishy, cartoonish critters and thrill at the immediate effects that their decisions have on the trajectory of the story. It's almost like a picture book come to life.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



**HEADSHOTS:** GREAT CREATURE ARTWORK, FUN SCRIPT, UNUSUAL STYLE OF PLAY  
**MISFIRES:** HTML RANDOMLY APPEARS IN SOME TEXT BOXES, OTHER VISUAL GLITCHES

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# CLASSIC CUT

## WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

MAURICE SENDAK 🦋 USA - 1963

**H**aving sold nearly 20 million copies worldwide – not to mention nabbing a Caldecott medal along the way – Maurice Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are* remains the ultimate monster picture book, 50 years on.

Today, monsters for the very young are common, but in 1963, parents were more accustomed to *Goodnight Moon* or a fistful of nursery rhymes before bed. This is the book that broke the rules.

We've got a kid who threatens to eat his mother, after she sends him to his room without dinner. With his temper still boiling, protagonist Max dreams up a world and populates it with monsters that seem to spring from his own subconscious. In its near-wordless middle section, he encounters beastly manifestations of his own rage, with "terrible claws" and "gnashing teeth." As the images gradually take over more and more of the unused space on each spread, Max conquers these inner demons by barking at the moon and swinging wildly from the trees.

After proving to be the wildest of the wild by throwing a temper tantrum, he sails back to his room, calm and relieved, suggesting that such impulses are within all of us, and that letting these angers out, regardless of our age, is both therapeutic and necessary.

Clearly there's more going on here than a romp in an enchanted forest. Not surprisingly, its release was not without controversy and even sparked a heated debate between Sendak and psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, who stated that the book was "captivated by an adult psychological understanding of how to deal with destructive fantasies in the child. What [Sendak] failed to understand is the incredible fear it evokes in the child to be sent to bed without supper, and this by the first and foremost giver of food and security – his mother."

Emulating Max, Sendak threw a tantrum of his own. As recently as a 2005 NPR interview, he renamed the psychologist "Beno Brutalheim," "because he wrote a long article on *Wild Things*, which completely destroyed the book."

Of course, the book was anything but destroyed by Bettelheim's criticism. Sendak's cross-hatched monsters have become iconic images of children's literature. A few generations ago, parents may have feared exposing their kids to these creatures, but today's youngsters can dress up as one of the Wild Things, thanks to store-bought costumes. Spike Jonze's 2009 film adaptation pushed the story into the digital era, rendering the monsters with both humour and horror, particularly in

their unpredictable and often violent natures.

Closer to the genre, *Where the Wild Things Are* also deals with subjects and themes that prefigure many themes in horror cinema. There are echoes of Max's frustration in a film such as *The Brood*, in which inner demons turn literal. In its depiction of an angry child allowed to run wild, it also anticipates Linda Blair's transformation into a little hellion in *The Exorcist*, or even Damien in David Seltzer's *The Omen*. Perhaps it is for this reason that references to Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* pop up in unexpected places; most recently as a jokey comparison to an illustration of the Devil himself in Seth Rogen's *This Is the End*.

For his part, Sendak revealed that he was inspired to create his titular Wild Things from ghoulish caricatures of his own relatives who came over to his house as a child. He described them as having "unkempt hair" and "horrifying teeth" and that they would pinch his cheeks and devour all the food in the Sendak household.

Wildly popular, the book became the focal point in the late author's career. Prior to its publication, he had been working on the whimsical Nutshell Library series for HarperCollins (*One Was Johnny*, *Alligators All Around*); following it, he embarked on books and projects that delved into even darker territory, such as the eerie fairy tale *Outside Over There* (1981), or his take on the Brothers Grimm in *Dear Mili* and *The Juniper Tree*. They're all full of spellbinding imagery of dark, overgrown forests whose foliage

## WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



## STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

fights for space on the pages.

A runaway success, *Where the Wild Things Are* paved the way for a new wave of children's books that tackled a more realistic psychology of childhood, as opposed to earlier didactic tomes aimed to solely to educate. In its wake, other *enfant terribles* of the literary scene were allowed to thrive, notably maverick Tomi Ungerer (*The Three Robbers*) and Roald Dahl.

Sendak described both the book's legacy, and his own stamp on kid lit, best when he said: "We're animals. We're violent. We're criminal... And if I've done anything, I've had kids express themselves as they are."

JEFF SZPIRGLAS





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# INSIDIOUS 2

## CHAPTER

FROM THE MAKERS OF  
*SAW* AND *THE CONJURING*



ON BLU-RAY AND DVD DECEMBER 31



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